

Ju-jitsu Parenting: Fighting Back from the Down Position
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All situations are different. The following discussion offers some suggestions for possible communication strategies that may be helpful in responding to the distorted family relationship processes associated with “parental alienation” family dynamics.

1. Avoid using the term “parental alienation.”

In working with mental health professionals, the term “parental alienation” can be controversial and divisive. The major drawback is that the use of the term “parental alienation” can raise the possibility that you are trying to avoid taking personal responsibility for your own poor parenting behaviors by blaming others for the consequences of your own poor parenting. This directly feeds the false narrative being constructed about you by the child and ex-spouse that you lack self-reflective capability.

Alternative framing:

Q: “What’s happening?”

I believe there is a family coalition of the father and my son (mother and my son; father and my daughter, etc.) that is targeting me for hostility and rejection. I believe my child is receiving messages from my ex- that it is acceptable and okay to hate me and treat me with contempt and disrespect.

Take control of the language defining the family dynamic. The phrase “parental alienation” automatically raises the suspicion that you are simply trying to blame the other parent for your own problematic parenting that is creating the conflict with the child – which feeds the narrative being created about you that you lack self-awareness about your role in the parent-child conflict. Besides, the term “parental alienation” is not a clinical description of the actual family relationship dynamics. The correct clinical description within family systems theory is a parent-child “coalition” or triangulation. Saying that the child is being “triangulated” into the spousal conflict shows sensitivity and self-reflective insight about the plight of the child. Saying that there is a “coalition” is stating that there are sides, but without seeming to avoid your responsibility in this process.

Q “Do you think it’s alienation?”

Labeling it like that is not something I think about, I just want to have a loving and affectionate relationship with my son (daughter, children). I do think my son and his father are in a coalition that is targeting me for hostility and rejection, and I believe, having lived with my ex- and watching this develop, that my son is getting a message from his father that treating me with contempt and disrespect is acceptable.

Avoid the term alienation. Take charge of defining the family dynamics in a way that will be productive.

By avoiding using the term “parental alienation” you counteract the suspicion that you are trying to avoid taking responsibility for your own parenting, and you will appear balanced. By focusing on restoring a loving and affectionate relationship with your child you present a positive, solution-focused, goal that the mental health professional can join and support. Saying that your child is receiving messages from the other parent that you are to be treated with contempt and disrespect is a reasonable family process that other’s can readily understand.

Q: “That sounds like alienation?”

If you think so, I just want to have a loving and affectionate relationship with my son (daughter, children) and it’s been impossible since the divorce.

Avoid taking the bait. Take control of the language defining the family dynamic. Let the mental health professional make his or her own decisions about labels, this avoids putting you in a position in which you appear to be trying to avoid responsibility for your parenting (your role). Define your goal as simply achieving a “loving and affectionate” relationship with your child. This makes you seem sensitive and reasonable, not blaming of the other parent. All good parents want a “loving and affectionate” relationship with their children.

Adding the phrase, “...and it’s been impossible since the divorce” communicates that it was possible to have a positive relationship with the child prior to the divorce, implying that the conflict you’re having is a product of the divorce rather than authentic to your actual relationship with the child.

Q: “What is your ex- doing that is contributing to the problems with your son?”

My ex- makes it very hard for my son and I to have a separate relationship of shared love and affection by continually disrupting and intruding into any opportunity I have to form an affectionate and loving relationship with my son (daughter, children), continually calling, emailing, texting my son when he’s at my home, and not supporting my son’s coming to visit me and spend time with me.

Avoid the term “alienation.” Discuss specifics of the other parent’s interference. Be calm, rational, and collected. You are being described as an “insensitive/abusive” parent in the narrative being cast by your child and your ex-spouse, in which you are portrayed as overly emotional, overly critical, and self-centered. Presenting as calm, rational, and reasonable counteracts this false narrative.

By focusing on the intrusions of the ex- into your ability to have a “separate” relationship with the child implies that the ex- is involved in, and potentially instigating, the conflicts you’re having with the child, and yet you don’t have to use the term “alienation.”

Do you think he’s trying to alienate your son from you?

I try to stay away from labels like that. I do think that the father and my son have a coalition in which I’m the target for their hostility and rejection.

Avoid bait. Take control of the language defining the family dynamic.

“I try to stay away from labels like that” makes you sound reasonable and as trying to stay above the “he-said/she-said” accusations and counter-accusations.

2. Know the Narrative

You are being defined. You must understand this narrative in order to counteract it.

- You are overly **critical of the child** (which is emotionally abusive of the child)
- You are **insensitive of the child** (you don't listen to the child)
- You are **not self-reflective regarding your own flaws** (you are self-centered; everything has to be your way – **You never apologize** for your own flaws)

3. Know the Trap

The child then makes a false/distorted accusation

Ch: "You always criticize me for no reason."

You naturally defend yourself that this allegation is not true

Par: "That's not true. You treat me with disrespect and are verbally abusive."

But that's the TRAP: You just demonstrated your "insensitivity" in "not listening to the child" and your "criticism of the child." You are "not demonstrating a capacity for self-reflection" on your own parenting but are externalizing the blame onto the child. In defending yourself, you just made the case for them and proved yourself to be insensitive, critical, and lacking in self-reflection.

Ch: "See, she (he) never listens to me. She (he) always thinks she's right.

Therapist: (to you) "Your child is trying to express his (her) feelings about being criticized, we need to listen and understand these feelings from the child if we're to resolve them."

The Double-Bind Trap

However, if you don't defend yourself, then you're admitting to the false allegations. If we "validate the child's feelings" then we validate the false accusation that you are overly critical and insensitive, when, in truth, it is the child who is hostile-provoking.

But if you try to clarify your innocence, then you are seen as overly defensive, insensitive to the child, incapable of self-reflection, and as externalizing your own responsibility by criticizing your child, thereby validating by your very defense the allegations being made against you.

That's the Trap: You're damned if you do (i.e., if you accept the false accusation) and you're damned if you don't (i.e., if you defend yourself against the false narrative).

So what do you do?

4. Ju-Jitsu Communication

Metaphor: in the “sport” of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) there are two principle fighting styles, 1) Strikers, who use punches and kicks from standing positions, and 2) Ju-jitsu fighters, who take the fighting to the mat in more of a wrestling style as they try to lock up their opponents in chokes, arm-locks, and leg-locks to obtain submission (a “tap-out”).

When a striker takes the fighting to the mat, it’s called “ground-and-pound.” The two fighters are on the ground, chest-to-chest, with the striker on the top raining down elbows and hammer fists on the head of the opponent. That’s what’s happening to you, you’re being pummeled by a ground-and-pound strategy where you can’t respond with an effective defense because you’re being held flat on your back.



However, a ju-jitsu fighter prefers to be on his back, because then he has both of his arms and legs free for “grappling” and grabbing, whereas the fighter on the top has to use both legs and one arm to support his body weight in the top position. The ju-jitsu fighter is trying to catch and grab an out of place arm or leg of the opponent to secure a submission hold. Ju-jitsu fighters are extremely dangerous when on their backs.

Standard communication conflict would be analogous to “strikers;” the other person strikes you with an allegation and you strike back with your defense. The problem is that the false allegations made about you by the child and ex- immediately place you on the defensive, you’re on your back getting pummeled by elbows and fists raining down on you, and any strike you try to make is counterpunched by the communication trap of parental alienation (damned if you do, damned if you don’t) so that you’re just a bloody and swollen mess.

Ju-Jitsu Communication:

The solution is to shift your “parenting communication fighting style” to ju-jitsu, where the opponent’s own force is first managed, then redirected, and ultimately turned against them so that they become trapped in a (metaphorical) arm-bar or leg-lock from which they cannot escape. The goal is not to counter-strike, but is instead to use a set of more sophisticated communication skills to counteract the advantages of your opponent, turning these seeming advantages into weaknesses.

Ju-jitsu, however, is more complicated than merely punching and kicking. Punches and kicks are pretty straightforward and easy to use. With ju-jitsu, however, the fighter must first learn a variety of ju-jitsu holds that are appropriate to a various contexts. Ju-jitsu parenting communications require that we learn and understanding some basics of how parenting communication functions.

Authority System vs. Social Dialogue System

Parenting involves the use of two separate brain systems; **the Authority System**, which is essentially a set of dominance-submission networks that achieve child **obedience through discipline strategies** (i.e., rewards for good behavior, punishment for bad behavior) and the **Social Dialogue System**, which is a complex social relationship system that achieves child **cooperation through guidance and communication strategies**.

It is beyond the scope of the current advice to discuss in more detail the use of these brain systems in parenting, but it is simply important to understand here that “parental alienation” processes **nullify the Authority System** as a parenting tool for targeted parents. What would typically be available to you as a parent in terms of “delivering consequences for misbehavior,” is no longer available to you.

(By the way, “parental alienation” processes also nullify the Social Dialogue System as a parenting approach, so that there is currently nothing you can do to alter the child’s behavior toward you, but ju-jitsu parenting emerges from the Social Dialogue System, and ultimately the solution to the conflict with your child will emerge from the Social Dialogue System, not from the Authority System, so that it’s best to parent from social dialogue approaches rather than the Authority System until the authentic child can be recovered.)

Punishment for child misbehavior is not an option.

Ju-jitsu parenting operates entirely from the Social Dialogue brain system.

Organizing Intentions:

There is a specific brain relationship system that serves as the core of the Social Dialogue system. This brain relationship system is technically called “intersubjectivity,” but I refer to it as **“Psychological Connection.”** This brain system allows us to feel what other people feel as if we were having the experience ourselves. The Psychological Connection system is the brain system responsible for allowing us to experience what the actors in the movies feel as if we were having the experience ourselves.

The Psychological Connection system is based on a set of brain cells called “mirror neurons.” Because we’ve identified the brain cells responsible for this Psychological Connection system, we’re able to put people in brain scanning machines and determine exactly what the Psychological Connection system is designed to register, and what we’ve discovered is that it’s designed to read **THE INTENTIONS** of other people; what’s motivating their actions.

Understanding how to use our **INTENTIONS** in our communication exchanges is one of the keys to ju-jitsu parenting.

There are four primary intentions, two are relationship building and two are maturation building.

The two relationship building intentions (and the ones we want to make frequent use of) are:

1. **The Intent to Understand:** which is a simple curiosity to understand the other person's world from the other person's perspective. What is it like to be them?
2. **The Intent to Be-With:** This is a wonderful intention, and it is so incredibly simple, yet also incredibly powerful in building relationship. I just want to be-with you; not necessarily to do something (i.e., an Intent to Task), but simply because I enjoy being with you.

Both relationship-building intentions communicate, "I care more about **who you are** than what you do" – They treat the other person as a person, and so they both feel very good to the other person.

The two maturation-building intentions are:

3. **The Intent to Task:** Accomplishing the task is more important than the person's wants or feelings. The person is secondary to the task. Schoolwork is a classic example of an Intent to Task; it's not relevant that the child doesn't want to do the schoolwork; the child must nevertheless do the assigned coursework. This intention of ours toward accomplishing the task as being more important than what the child wants and feels, and the child's submission to accomplishing the task, leads to increased maturation of the child's brain regarding the focused accomplishment of goal-directed activity.
4. **The Intent to Change:** I don't like what you're doing, stop it and do something different. This intention is essentially a power assertion intent to change what the other person is doing because we find what the other person is doing either annoying or painful. The other person's feelings and desires are again secondary to this intent of ours to change what the other person is doing ("It's not relevant what you want or feel, you need to be different"). This intention leads to increased maturation of the brain regarding impulse inhibition within a social context.

Both maturation-building intentions communicate, "I care more about **what you do** than who you are" – They treat the other person as an object, and so both are experienced by the other person as somewhat painful (it's painful to be dehumanized and treated as an object).

The brains of other people are designed to read our intentions, not just our actions. So it becomes incredibly important to ju-jitsu parenting that we are aware of the intention that is organizing our responding. Our underlying intentions governing our responses can change from sentence to sentence in the flow of our communication. We must recognize what intention is organizing any given response we make. This becomes easier and easier with practice, as we gain more experience with what each separate intention feels like. Learning ju-jitsu takes practice.

An **Intent to Task** or **Intent to Change** will automatically be perceived by the other person as being critical (i.e., painful/abusive), insensitive to the other person, as self-centered on our part, and as lacking in self-reflection regarding our own actions and role.

On the other hand, an **Intent to Understand** and **Intent to Be-With** will be perceived by others as warmly nurturing, understanding, sensitive to the feelings of the other person, and as being self-aware.

In ju-jitsu parenting we want to make abundant use of an Intent to Understand and Intent to Be-With, and extremely limited use of an Intent to Task and Intent to Change.

So what does this look like:

Ch: “You always criticize me for no reason.”

Par: “Oh my goodness, you feel I criticize you too much? (**Intent to Understand**) I’m sorry you feel this way? (**Invitation to Repair**). I love you so much (**Intent to Be-With**). I don’t mean for you to feel criticized (**Intent to Change – careful, move away quickly**). What sorts of things do you feel criticized about? (**Strong Intent to Understand; Inviting Criticism**)

Note how intentions shift from sentence to sentence. Note, too, how the initial Intent to Understand captures the energy of the child’s accusation and communicates your capacity for self-reflection and sensitivity for the other person’s point of view. This, in-and-of-itself, challenges and contradicts the “insensitive/abusive parent” narrative that they are trying to construct about you. Your words don’t need to challenge this false accusation (in fact, defending yourself with words would have the opposite effect of confirming the allegations of your insensitivity and lack of self-reflection). Instead, your response from an Intent to Understand challenges their false allegation by directly demonstrating that you are sensitive and self-reflective.

This is followed by an Invitation to Repair (discussed relative to Breach-and-Repair sequences and the Apology Sequence). The Invitation to Repair apology also directly challenges and contradicts the “insensitive/abusive parent” narrative that they are trying to construct about you (“mom is so self-absorbed, she always thinks she’s right, she never apologizes for what she does wrong” – “That’s not true” – “See, what’d I tell you. She never apologizes”). Instead, you apologize early and often. “I’m sorry you feel that way” doesn’t admit guilt, just compassion for the other person’s pain.

If we’re dancing and I step on your toes, obviously I didn’t mean to step on your toes, but I nevertheless did. My immediate response should be “Oh, I’m sorry.” Then we can figure out what went wrong. “I thought we were waltzing, so I did xyz.” – “Oh, I thought we were doing a tango, so I did abc.” – “Oh, miscommunication, I’m sorry. So are we waltzing or tangoing?” – “I’m sorry too, let’s do the tango, I want to do the tango.” Okay. Later can we waltz?”

When we’re in a relationship dance, I obviously don’t mean to step on your toes, so I don’t need to defend myself that I didn’t mean to step on your toes. “I’m sorry” is always an appropriate response to stepping on your toes. Then we can clarify where the miscommunication occurred.

“I love you so much” is a wonderful Intent to Be-With to solidify the Invitation to Repair apology. Furthermore, there is a subtle “call-and-response” to this phrase. When we say, “I love you” (the call) it naturally triggers the other person to provide the “I love you too” response. While the alienated child won’t overtly provide this response at this time, it’s always good therapeutically to trigger it. In addition, if a therapist is present it will likewise trigger in the therapist an unconscious awareness of the “response” – “Oh, what a wonderfully loving parent, who wants the child’s love in return. What a cruel child for not giving the called for “response.”

“I don’t mean for you to feel criticized” is an Intent to Change (i.e., “don’t feel criticized”) but it’s softened by being couched in your feelings (i.e., “I don’t mean for you...”) so that it doesn’t directly invalidate the child’s feelings (as would a statement “you shouldn’t feel criticized”), while nevertheless softly invalidating the child’s feelings of being criticized. Intent to Task and Intent to Change are very dangerous, and should be used very cautiously and exceedingly sparingly. Run away from either the moment you make them.

“What sorts of things do you feel criticized about?” is a direct run away from an Intent to Change into an Intent to Understand by INVITING CRITICISM. Wow. Inviting criticism is a strong Intent to Understand. This will directly contradict the narrative of you being insensitive, never listening to the child, and lacking in self-reflection. You’re INVITING criticism.

Ch: “The other day you wouldn’t take me to McDonalds after school and I was hungry.”

Par: “Oh, I’m sorry. (Invitation to Repair) You heard that as my not caring about you? (Intent to Understand – and reframe) So you’d like if I listened to you more and did more of what you wanted to do? (Intent to Understand) The other day, though, I had dinner waiting at home (Intent to Task – careful, move away quickly). What should we do when we already have dinner waiting at home and you want to go to McDonalds? (Intent to Understand)

Ch: “I hate your dinners. You’re a terrible cook.”

Par: “Really? What if we were to get frozen dinners at the market, you know, ones that are already prepared and we just have to put them in the microwave, would that be helpful? (Intent to Task in offering a suggestion, followed by an Intent to Understand)

Ch: “No. It’s just always what you want to do.”

Par: “So you’re asking for more input into decisions? (Intent to Understand) But I’m still confused, are you saying we should ALWAYS eat at McDonalds? (Intent to Understand – binding arm-bar) That can become expensive. Can we eat at home sometimes, or do you only want to eat at McDonalds? (Intent to Understand – binding arm-bar pressure, looking for “tap-out” of “we can eat at home sometimes”)

Opening with an Invitation to Repair apology directly contradicts the narrative that they are trying to construct about you that you lack self-reflection and never apologize for your role in the conflict. Your apology is a “call” in a call-and-response sequence that directly triggers the social response of “it’s okay” forgiveness. If the child does not provide the repairing “forgiveness” response prompted by the apology call, this become directly evident to the therapist or forensic evaluator – “the parent is being wonderfully understanding and seeking repair, but the child is being unreasonably resistant.”

Respond primarily with an Intent to Understand. Don’t defend. We’ll talk about Reframing in a moment (another key ju-jitsu parenting technique). When the child attacks, the Intent to Understand absorbs the energy of the attack. You sound wonderfully understanding and reasonable, in direct contradiction to the narrative characterization being made by the child and ex-spouse about you. You don’t have to verbally contradict their false distortions (which will only make you sound defensive, insensitive, and lacking in self-reflection); instead you contradict their false narrative directly by BEING other than what they say you are.

An Intent to Understand also draws out and exposes their distorted and false communication dynamics in preparation for your application of a communication ju-jitsu locking move.

“So you’d like if I listened to you more and did more of what you wanted to do?” Here is the ju-jitsu set up for the metaphorical arm-bar or leg-lock submission hold. You’re using an Intent to Understand to extend their position into their vulnerability.

“The other day, though, I had dinner waiting at home.” You’re locking-in the arm-bar, setting up the contradiction, their inflexibility. This is an Intent to Task (i.e., what the child wants is not relevant, the task, in this case dinner waiting at home, is more important than the child’s wants or desires). When we use an Intent to Task or Intent to Change in ju-jitsu parenting it’s to lock in the hold, but we need to quickly return to the relationship building intentions of an Intent to Understand or Intent to Be-With.

“What should WE do when WE already have dinner waiting at home and you want...?” This springs the hold. Notice first the use of “we” is a joining word. We’re in this together. We have a problem to solve. How do WE solve the problem? Then, we’re asking the child for the compromise rather than proposing it ourselves, which directly counters the false narrative of “she (or he) always has to have things her (his) way.” You don’t. But there are also restrictions in the world. How do we work those out?

“I hate your dinners...” the child tries to avoid the ju-jitsu communication hold by changing the topic and going on the attack. The punch of the striker. Don’t punch back. You can’t win fighting as a striker. Maintain the ju-jitsu approach of fighting from the down position. The communication of disbelief “Really” effectively, but indirectly, invalidates the truth the child’s statement (i.e., that the child’s statement was so bizarre that it prompted an exclamation of mild disbelief. Followed by an acceptance of the child’s statement as if it was real so that you continue to try to understand the child’s world from the child’s point of view (“What if we were to get frozen dinners...”). You’re being totally reasonable, compromising, negotiating, so that your ju-jitsu parenting is exposing the child’s inflexibility and hostility (and lies about you being selfish, self-centered, inflexible, critical, and lacking in self-reflection). You are the epitome of sensitive understanding, flexibility, and cooperation.

“No, it’s always what you want to do.” The ju-jitsu communications are locking the child into a bind, so that the child’s communication become increasingly off-focus and disorganized. Eventually, you’ll just have to disengage, but as you disengage you’ll leave the child pondering the inconsistency of his or her belief that you are mean and insensitive when compared to the actual experience of the child regarding your understanding and sensitivity, and you will have exposed the child’s process to the therapist or forensic evaluator, as well as the lies about you being an “insensitive/abusive parent,” but without ever verbally challenging them (i.e., avoiding the striker approach to the conflict).

“So you’re asking for more input” is an Intent to Understand to set up the next ju-jitsu communication hold, “I’m confused...” In actual ju-jitsu, each hold has a name. In communication ju-jitsu this would be the “I’m confused...” move. When sprung at the right moment it can have a devastating communication effect. It is set up by two or three extensions of the child’s position through repeated Intents to Understand. Once the child’s position is extended and exposed, then the communication lock of “I’m Confused” can be made; “I’m confused, first you said x, but what about y?” How the child responds is pretty much irrelevant. “I’m confused” is a submission hold, so that continuing too far beyond it will likely prompt explosive child anger. Let this line of communication go (i.e., release the hold) and begin another line if you’d like with new Intents to Understand and Be-With (i.e., I love you, I care about you, I’m happy to be with you).

The Reframe

A very powerful ju-jitsu parenting move is the reframe. This takes a child’s rejecting criticism (the thesis) and reframes it as the child expressing a desire for loving bonding (the antithesis). The child’s moment-of-consternation at this reversal communication move can sometimes be somewhat amusing.

Ch: It always has to be your way. We always have to do things you want to do.

Par: So you don't like the places we go, you don't enjoy them? (Intent to Understand)

Ch: Yeah.

Par: I'm sorry you feel that way, sweetie. (Invitation to Repair; and endearment is an Intent to Be-With) So you'd like to go places where we can have fun together? Where would that be, where could we go that would be fun together? (Reframe criticism as the child expressing a desire to be with).

Ch: I don't want to go anywhere with you.

Par: So I'm confused. First you say you want more input into where we go so that it will be more fun for you, and now you're saying you don't want input. I'm confused, do you want input or do you not want input? ("I'm confused..." lock, binding with an Intent to Understand – "do you want input or do you not want input?")

Ch: I don't want to have anything to do with you. I just want to be at dad's.

Par: I'm sorry, sweetie. (Invitation to Repair; and endearment is an Intent to Be-With) But I love you. You are the joy of my life. You mean everything to me and I just enjoy being with you. Surely we can find something you'd like to do together? (Multiple Intent to Be-With barrage)

The child initiates a strike with the "selfish – it's always your way" theme. The ju-jitsu response is to avoid a counter-strike of "that's not true, just the other day we did..." which will only lead to "See, you never listen to what I'm saying. You never listen to me." Instead, the ju-jitsu response is an Intent to Understand which absorbs the energy of the child's criticism strike, and sets up the Reframe. The apology communicates an Invitation to Repair followed by a Reframe that assumes the child's communication represents a desire to be with. If the child complains about not having a good time (the thesis), then this implies that the child wants to have a good time with the parent (the antithesis). Okay, so where do you want to go? When the child strikes, we back away, and the child falls toward us.

The child cannot develop an organized response and reverts to overt rejection. This exposes for the therapist or forensic evaluator the child's process – "Wow, the parent is being totally understanding and cooperative, but the child is so hostile and rejecting" – and entirely undermines the false narrative being presented about you, that you're insensitive, that you're selfish, that it always has to be what you want, and that you never listen to the child.

So now initiate the "I'm confused..." move. "You said you wanted to do more fun things, but then you say you don't want to do fun things. Which is it?" Now you have the communication lock, bound with an Intent to Understand ("What do you want? Do you want input or not?").

The child cannot maintain communication coherence and reverts into overt rejection, thereby exposing the child's distorted relationship dynamic while making you look like the epitome of a reasonable, understanding, and loving parent.

In contrast to the child's overt rejection, the ju-jitsu response culminates in a strong Intent to Be-With barrage – beginning with an Invitation to Repair apology (for the child not liking you) – followed by the "I love you" call that will inherently prompt the "I love you too" response (call-and-response), even if non-expressed. Then some seriously loving communications (i.e., Intent to Be-With).

Another Reframe Scenario

Ch: You're always criticizing me for every little thing.

Par: Really? (An exclamation of mild disbelief subtly communicates invalidation of accuracy) You feel I'm always criticizing you? (Intent to Understand; absorbs energy of criticism) I'm so sorry you feel that way, sweetie. (Invitation to Repair; and endearment is an Intent to Be-With) I love you so much; I don't want you to feel like I'm always critical of you. (Intent to Be-With; Intent to Change, careful - move away quickly) What sort of things do you feel I criticize you about? (Strong Intent to Understand by Inviting Criticism).

Ch: You say 'do this, do that,' and if I don't do it fast enough you get all angry about it.

Par: So you don't like when I get angry with you?

Ch: No.

Par: So when I get angry at you, you feel as if I'm not happy with you and don't like you? (Intent to Understand setting up the Reframe; "you don't like me" thesis to "I want you to like me antithesis)

Ch: Yeah.

Par: I'm sorry, sweetie. So you'd like it if we hugged more and laughed more, and shared more affection, and when I'm angry that gets in the way of feeling close? (Reframe; the child's criticism of parental anger is reframed as the child's desire for closeness)

Ch: Uhhh, no, I don't want anything to do with you.

Par: So, I'm confused. You say you don't like when I'm angry or critical of you. So you'd like me to be nicer and kinder so we can have a closer relationship. ("I'm confused" lock is followed by a Reframe of the child's criticism as a desire to bond)

Ch: Uhhh, no. I just want you to leave me alone.

Par: So, I'm still confused. Do you mean that it doesn't matter if I'm nice or not, you just don't want to have a relationship with me even if I'm nice to you? (Continuing the lock of "But I'm confused" followed by an Intent to Understand)

Ch: Yeah.

Par: Why not? (Simple, direct, challenging, Intent to Understand), I love you so much, sweetie. (Intent to Be-With; "I love you/I love you too" Call-and-Response) You mean everything to me. You are my world. Why don't you want to share love and affection? I love you so much, and I just think you're wonderful. (Multiple Intent to Be-With Barrage, with a quick Intent to Understand)

Ch: Because I hate you.

Par: I'm so sorry, sweetie. (Invitation to Repair) I wish there was something I could do to make things different. (Invitation to Repair)

The Reframe (discussed shortly) takes the thesis expressed by the child's criticism and reverses it into the implied antithesis. For example, "you're mean to me" becomes "I want you to be nice to me" and "you're always yelling at me" becomes "I want to share affection with you."

The Breach-and-Repair Sequence

Healthy relationships involve a relationship dance of joining, separation, and joining again. The relationship periods of being joined produce a wonderfully warm feeling of being understood and of belonging. The separations interrupt this warmly positive feeling and so are experienced as mildly painful, which produces a pop of anger in the relationship. The two participants in the relationship then do a relationship dance of communications and relational moves designed to "repair" the "breach" in the relationship field.

These minor "breach-and-repair" sequences allow us to develop a healthy "self-structure" of our authentic individuality (breach) in a nurturing social context (repair). Breach-and-repair sequences also develop "thickness" and complexity in the relationship, in which the child learns that no matter how bad things get (the breach) there is always a way to fix it (the repair); we have a way to transform negative emotions and relationships into positive emotions and relationships.

Research on "breach-and-repair" sequences has found that the intensity of the breach component is not inherently damaging, as long as the relationship can be repaired. What is emotionally and psychologically damaging is the inability to repair the relationship, so that the participants are afraid to express authenticity for fear of creating an irreparable breach that would leave the participants in a state of lonely isolation, or the participants continually create conflicts that are not repaired, so that the participants continually feel isolated, alone, and alienated.

The Apology Sequence

We make mistakes. Within the scientific literature, relationship mistakes are called "empathic failures." They are normal, and they are actually healthy because they represent the breach in the "breach-and-repair sequence" that is essential to healthy self-structure development (i.e., creating an authentic Self embedded in a nurturing social context).

Because we make mistakes, and because mistakes are healthy as long as we repair the relationship, we have developed a wonderful repair communication called "an apology" ("I'm sorry"). Thank goodness. We don't have to be perfect. In fact, perfection is not healthy. Empathic failures are normal and healthy in leading into and through the "breach-and-repair" sequence. We simply need to fix the relationship when we make mistakes.

The Apology Sequence contains three steps:

1. We must understand what we did wrong.

This is a crucial step. Failure to understand what we did wrong will make our apology insincere and ineffective. This is typically the stage at which people argue. The injured person tries to tell the offending partner what that partner did wrong (i.e., the empathic failure) that resulted in the injury to the aggrieved partner in the relationship. The offending partner feels criticized and offers the defense that he or she didn't mean to cause injury (i.e., "it's not my fault"). However, this defense sounds to the aggrieved partner as if the other person doesn't understand what he or she did wrong, so that the aggrieved partner tries more forcefully to educate the offending partner as to the empathic failure that caused the injury. The offending partner feels more forcefully criticized for being "bad" and so offers a stronger defense, thereby continuing the escalation of the fight (i.e., the breach).

However, once the offending partner ceases to respond defensively and understands his or her empathic failure (i.e., we make mistakes), then the repair sequence can begin. The first step is for the "offending" partner in the relationship to understand what he or she did "wrong" (i.e., the empathic failure). An Intent to Understand is central to initiating the Repair Sequence.

2. The apology

This stage is pretty straightforward and simple... "I'm sorry."

If the first stage has been successfully navigated, so that the aggrieved partner feels that the offending partner fully understands the offense (i.e., the empathic failure) that he or she did that caused the injury to the aggrieved partner, then the apology of "I'm sorry" is oftentimes sufficient to repair the breach and restore the relationship.

Sometimes, however, a third step is necessary.

3. Restitution

Sometimes the injury is too painful so that the apology is insufficient to repair the relationship. In these cases, a third step may be necessary – "What can I do to make things better?" – "What can I do to make it up to you?"

Sometimes this simple question is enough to soothe the inflammation of the aggrieved partner's emotional pain, allowing the relationship to be repaired (typically cemented by an affectionate display of bonding, such as a hug). Sometimes a form of restitution needs to be negotiated to restore balance (justice) to the relationship.

The Apology Sequence is:

1. What did I do? (invite criticism)
2. I'm sorry. (apologize)
3. What can I do to make it up to you? (offer restitution)

Inviting criticism through an Intent to Understand the other person's world from the other person's perspective initiates the Apology Sequence. Offering an apology, "I'm sorry," represents an Invitation to Repair the relationship. In normal social communication, the phrase "I'm sorry" is the first half of a "call-and-response" sequence in which the triggered response is forgiveness – "that's okay." If injury persists, additional soothing with an Intent to Understand ("what can I do to make it better?") may be necessary to finally repair the relationship.

Emotional Tone

There are four primary emotions, Angry, Sad, Afraid, and Happy. Each emotional channel has unique features and functions. It is again beyond the scope of the discussion offered here to discuss the emotion system more fully, but it is simply important here to focus on the nature and role of the Happy emotional channel.

The problem of "parental alienation" is essentially a disruption to the normal-range functioning of the child's attachment system and bonding to the targeted parent. Of the four emotions, "happy" is the social bonding emotion. When we laugh in a social group, everyone starts to laugh, even if they don't know why they're laughing. Laughter is contagious; it spreads from brain to brain to brain.

Anger always breaches psychological connection. Happy invites and establishes psychological connection.

The psychological connection system allows us to feel what the actors feel as we watch a movie. What happens, however, when the movie becomes too scary, what do we do? We look away; we break connection. Children feel what their parents feel, just like we feel what the actor in the movie feels. What happens when parents feel too sad, too angry, too anxious, too stressed? All of these feelings are being directly imported into the child's experience just like when we watch a movie. If it's too painful to stay psychologically connected to a parent, the child will withdraw his or her connection to the parent.

The withdrawal of psychological connection produces a tremendous feeling of psychological loneliness and alienation for the child. The child likely doesn't understand the origins of this painful experience, but simply recognizes it has something to do with the parent. The parent is somehow causing pain. And oftentimes, the child misattributes the cause of the pain to the reasons being offered by the other parent, the ex-spouse, that the targeted parent is a bad parent.

So we also need to restore the child's psychological connection to you. If you are in a brain state of anger, anxiety, or sadness, this will interfere with the child's reconnecting psychologically to you because these are painful feelings for the child to join. However, the emotion of happy – in this case a low-level happy/pleasure – will invite psychological connection. Happy is the social bonding emotion.

Happy is the “let go” emotion, no worries, everything is going to be okay. On a scale of 1 to 10, the happy/pleasant brain state we want isn't very intense, just a 1 or 2, representing a low-level “background brain state” of relaxed, calm, pleasant (to conceptualize what the low-level Happy brain state is like, think Dalai Lama; he's in a general background emotional state that's peaceful, relaxed, compassionate, pleasant; low-level happy).

If we get wrapped up in the child's complaints, behavior, and criticism and take them seriously, we'll be in an anxious brain state. Anxious takes things seriously. Or perhaps the child's rejection will engender a parental brain state of sadness and hurt, or anger at the child's defiance and hostility. All of these emotional brain states will inhibit the repair and formation of psychological connection with the child, because we'll be asking the child to form a psychological connection to a distressed parental brain state.

A low-level happy, relaxed, pleasant brain state, however, is contagious. Happy is contagious. It spreads from brain to brain to brain. Happy is the social bonding emotion. It relaxes emotional spasms, it's the let-go/no worries brain state.

Low-level happy (a 1 or 2) also communicates dominance. While we tend to think of anger as the dominance emotion, happy too also communicates dominance. Happy communicates relaxed, that there is no perceived threat. If you attack me and I smile and am amused by your attack, my response of relaxed amusement communicates that I don't perceive you as a threat. I'm dominant.

So when your child evidences an over-empowered elevation in the parent-child relationship, in which the child judges you as a parent and as a person, if you maintain a calm, relaxed, brain state of mild bemusement (low-level 1 or 2 Happy) you will communicate your continued dominance within the relationship without having to resort to power-assertion techniques associated with anger or the Dominance-Submission networks.

That's why, when the child makes some sort of outrageous accusation against you, if you respond with a very brief dismissive surprise (“Really?”) or a brief burst of a low-level chuckle, you will communicate an invalidation for the child's accusation without actually having to address it (“that's so silly, it amuses me”). We can only respond with amusement at the other person's attack if we are dominant and secure in the relationship. A background brain state of low-level Happy (a 1 or 2 on a 10 point scale) communicates dominance and security.

Of important note, however, is that invalidating a person by laughing at them is experienced as very painful by the other person. When maintaining a background brain

state of relaxed Happy, it is very important to keep it at a very low level. We want the relaxed, no worries, calm affectionate concern of a low-level Happy brain, not an invalidating, dismissive, “your not to be taken seriously” communication of more overt happy, particularly in response to the child’s brain state of angry-hostile.

Angry very much wants to be taken seriously. A low-level Happy maintains a calm and relaxed brain state that invites psychological connection, and it can serve as the ground for a compassionate Intent to Understand that communicates a soothing love, concern, and compassion to the emotional pain underlying the child’s anger. Our goal for our emotional brain state is a calm, relaxed, confident, secure, compassionate, understanding, loving and accepting brain state. No worries, everything is going to be okay; oh, my goodness, I’m so sorry you’re upset; what can we do to make it better? Invite criticism, invite repair.

Call-and-Response

There are two call-and-response sequences that can be usefully employed in “parental alienation” relationships with the child:

“I love you/I love you too” - Invitation to Bond

The “I love you” call prompts the “I love you too” response. This response of “I love you too” is automatically triggered within the child even if the child does not overtly express the response. The “I love you/I love you too” call-and-response typically occurs at separations, and often when reuniting, and can be accompanied by a brief social bonding hug.

Whenever you rejoin or separate from your child (when you pick your child up for visitation or return the child from visitation, when you pick up or drop off your child at school, when you first see your child in the morning, or when you last put your child to bed at night) you can offer an “I love you” call to insert into the child’s brain the “I love you too” response, even through the child will not overtly provide the response. The “I love you too” response is automatically inserted in the child’s brain whenever “the call” is made. The child won’t say it, but it’s automatically there. It’s a small way of bypassing the “parental alienation” rejection and inserting a small dose of affection and bonding directly into the child’s experience.

“I’m sorry/that’s okay” - Invitation to Repair

The “I’m sorry” call of apology automatically prompts a “that’s okay” response of forgiving, and represents an invitation to repair a minor relationship breach. For minor breaches, the “I’m sorry/that’s okay” call-and-response is simply a matter of appropriate social etiquette to maintain a conflict-free relationship. For more serious relationship breaches, a full Apology Sequence (i.e., 1. Understanding what we did wrong, 2. Apologize, and 3. Offer of restitution) is necessary to repair the breach, and a premature use of a social etiquette “I’m sorry/that’s okay” call-and-response will be perceived as too superficial and inadequate.

Nesting the “I’m sorry/that’s okay” call-and-response within a dialogue rich in Intent to Understand will tend to resolve any perception of superficiality.

Ju-jitsu Parenting “Holds”

The communication holds of ju-jitsu parenting are set-up using a series of Intents to Understand to extend and expose lines of distorted communication. Once the distorted communication is isolated and exposed, a ju-jitsu communication hold can be employed to lock the distorted communication, and a following Intent to Understand can encourage the “tap-out” submission from the child.

In actual ju-jitsu, different holds have different names. Some possible names for the communication “holds” in parenting ju-jitsu might be:

“I’m confused...”

This communication locking hold exposes contradictions and irrational criticisms. It is set up by drawing out the contradictions and irrational criticisms through a series of Intent to Understand. Once the contradictions and irrational criticisms are fully evidenced, then “I’m confused...” acts to define the contradictions and irrational criticisms, followed by a locking Intent to Understand asking the child to resolve the contradiction.

The Reframe

The Reframe reverses the meaning of the child’s criticism into a child motivation toward bonding. The “thesis” contains within itself the “antithesis.” Saying “black” implies the existence of “white.” Saying “up” implies “down.”

When the child says he or she doesn’t like it when you criticize the child, this implies that the child wants compliments from you and your positive esteem. When the child says he or she doesn’t like always doing what you want to do, this implies the child wants to do other things with you that the child finds enjoyable, that the child wants to have positive good times with you. The Reframe reverses the child’s statement (i.e., the thesis) into its implied opposite (i.e., its antithesis), the child’s expressed rejection is reversed into a communicated desire for bonding. The child, of course, will deny the implied antithesis, but the child’s communication is nevertheless stuck in a logical contradiction (e.g., if you complain because I’m not nice to you, that must mean that you want me to be nice to you).

The most powerful reframe is when the child proposes the thesis, “I don’t like you because you’re mean to me,” which contains its extended antithesis of “I want you to be nice to me, I want you to smile at me, I want you to love me.” Reframing “you’re mean to me” as “I want you to love me” can be so incredibly powerful that it is worth devoting communication time to setting up this ju-jitsu parenting “hold.”

Invite the child to offer criticisms of how mean you are (“Are there other ways you think I’m mean to you?”) Note that an Intent to Understand does not define reality or truth, you’re not acknowledging that you truly are mean. An Intent to Understand is simply seeking to understand the child’s experience from the child’s point of view, “Are there other ways **YOU THINK** I’m mean to you?” An Intent to Understand is not defining reality or truth; it is just seeking to understand the other person’s experience.

Invite the child to elaborate on how the child doesn’t like it when you’re “mean” (“So it really bothers you when I’m angry at you?” – which is setting up the antithesis of the child wanting affection, i.e., the opposite of your anger).

Invite the child to complain about never doing anything fun with you (So you don’t like the things we do together? And that bothers you.” – which is setting up the antithesis that the child wants to do fun things with you).

When the communication line is extended and exposed, then lock in the Reframe (“So it bothers you when I’m angry at you. I’m sorry. So how about I give you more hugs and smiles from now on. We can hug each other three times a day, and we’ll exchange compliments twice a day. Would that feel better?” – reframing the child’s complaints about mean as the antithesis of wanting affection, and then locking the “hold” with an Intent to Understand, “would that feel better?”).

The child will reject this offer. But now you’ve shifted the child’s communication from complaining about how mean you are to complaining about not wanting your affection, not wanting to be happy, not wanting love. This exposes for the therapist, the forensic evaluator (and for the child) how utterly irrational the child’s complaints are.

As a therapist, I will sometimes follow this reframe lock with a question to the child,

“Do you think that the problem with the world is that there’s too much happiness, too much love; so that you feel that you have to remove as much love and happiness whenever possible – ‘no, no, no, there’s too much love, there’s too much happiness, we can’t have any more love or happiness, there’s too much!’ – Or do you think that there’s too little happiness in the world, the world is too full of sadness and pain, so that we need to add happiness wherever and whenever we can? <pause> Personally, I think there’s too little love and happiness in the world, and I think we have a responsibility to add happiness and love wherever and whenever we can. But that’s just what I think.”

With the Reframe lock, the child is no longer rejecting you because you are a mean or bad parent; the child is rejecting you because you are a wonderful and loving parent. That’s just weird. Ta-da. You’ve made your point to the therapist and forensic evaluator (and to the child) that the child’s rejection of you is not because of anything you’re doing wrong, you are self-reflective on your own parenting, you are

understanding of the child's complaints, you are flexible and cooperative, you do negotiate. You are a loving and affectionate parent. But your child is irrationally rejecting and inflexible. The therapist and forensic evaluator can clearly see that this doesn't make sense. The child is arguing against being happy, against affection, against doing fun things.

The Reframe, when properly set up and locked in, reverses the child's negative/rejecting theses into their opposite positive/loving antitheses, and will thereby expose the child's rejection of a positive and loving relationship with you.

Inviting Solutions

Inviting the child to offer solutions under the guise of an Intent to Understand shifts negative criticisms into approach and bonding communications. Inviting Solutions typically begins with the phrase, "What should we do when...?"

Inviting Solutions can make it very hard for the child to maintain rejection. The child's criticisms are not met with defensiveness from you, so they lose power. In the absence of defensive responses that continue the conflict around the criticisms (i.e., "You're mean" – "No I'm not" – "Yes you are" – "No I'm not" ...), the energy of the criticisms just dissolve into the ju-jitsu communication of relentlessly seeking of solution (i.e., "So what should we do about this?"). Relentlessly, but gently, seeking solutions.

If you offer the solutions, though, the child will negate each and every offer. Inviting the child to offer solutions, however, exposes the child's irrational inflexibility. Inviting Solutions can be used following an "I'm confused..." lock to invite the child to "tap-out" in the face of the inherent inconsistencies and contradictions of the child's communication.

Inviting Criticism

Inviting criticism represents a strongly communicated Intent to Understand that exposes distorted relationship dynamics. The energy associated with criticism will eventually dissipate if it does not meet resistance.

Conflict and resistance continually feeds the energy of criticism (i.e., "You're mean" – "No I'm not" – "Yes you are" – "No I'm not" ...). A continual Intent to Understand, especially one that invites the criticism, will gradually but eventually dissipate the energy of the criticism, everything's been said. Under normal circumstances, this would allow for moving the dialogue to the next phases of conflict resolution, making an apology, finding solutions, and repairing the relationship. However, with "parental alienation" family dynamics the criticisms are an end unto themselves, and the child has zero motivation to repair the relationship.

However, by diffusing the energy of the criticisms, a continual Intent to Understand that is accelerated by actively inviting the criticisms, will more quickly place the

relationship status in the resolution stage, which will more clearly expose the child's lack of motivation to find resolution.

An observing therapist or forensic evaluator can more clearly see that the child's criticisms are not the issue, the problem is the child's inflexible and entrenched unwillingness to resolve the relationship conflict.

Intent to Be-With Barrage

A strongly loving barrage of Intent to Be-With comments disarm the opponent ("I'm sorry, but I love you so much. You mean the world to me. You're so special to me that I think about you all the time. You are the joy of my life." etc.). A barrage of Intent to Be-With comments will contrast starkly with direct rejection statements by the child (e.g., "I hate you. I never want to see you again." – "Oh my goodness, sweetie, I'm so sorry... because I love you. You mean everything to me. I just love you so much I don't think I could stand not ever seeing you again. It would break my heart, I love you so much.").

While not impossible, it's nevertheless very hard to maintain overt rejection in the face of an Intent to Be-With barrage.

The Tap-Out

In Mixed Marital Arts the submission hold locks the joint of the opponent into a position that the joint is not made to bend. If the submission hold is extended further, the joint will break. The opponent signals submission by making a tapping motion with the hand on the mat or body. The submission hold is then released so as not to injure the opponent's joint.

In communication ju-jitsu, the communication processes of the child will be extended, exposed, and then locked into contradiction and irrationality. This will frustrate the child's ability to maintain the "alienation" communications of hostility and rejection. The child will signal submission in several ways. Extending the communication lock beyond the child's signaling of submission may provoke the child into explosive anger in an effort to escape the locked-in communication dynamics.

Child Tap-Outs:

1. **Sputtering Disorganization:** The child's communication will become illogical and disorganized. The child will make off-topic statements and irrelevant accusations in an effort to disrupt, distract, and disorganize the coherence of the communication flow.
2. **Escape:** The child will try to flee the situation, either by physically leaving the environment or by demanding that you leave.

The child's "tap-out" should generally be respected by releasing the communication lock you have applied, allowing the child to regain free communication. It is important to note

that assertion, pressure, and force emanate from the emotional channel of Anger, and represent low-level anger; 1 or 2 on a 10-point scale. Unlike the weak emotions of anxiety and sadness, and the relaxed/no-worries emotion of happiness, the emotion of anger confers force and power. Low-level anger, at a 1 or 2, represents assertion and “voice,” without the angry or hurtful emotional tone. The emotion of anger always breaks psychological connection. We want to avoid the Angry emotional channel and maintain a background emotional brain state of relaxed, calm, no worries, low-level Happy. In ju-jitsu parenting, we want to avoid force and assertion. When the child seeks to avoid or flee, it’s typically best to allow. In ju-jitsu communications, we can maintain a relentless focus; extending, locking, reframing, exposing, locking, but it should always be from a relaxed brain state of a relentless Intent to Understand, not from a brain state of forceful assertion or power.

If the child becomes overwhelmed and seeks to escape, it’s probably best to respect this and allow the child to escape and to reconstitute his or her functioning. If we don’t release the child when the child “taps out” in submission, then we are liable to provoke an angry-aggressive explosion.

In some cases, however, we might want to gently negotiate a clearer “tap-out” with the child in which the child must engage in some designated action before we will release the communication. By the child agreeing to some designated action in order to be allowed to flee, or before we leave at the child’s direction, the child clearly indicates submission.

Ch: Get out! Just leave me alone.

Par: Okay, I can do that. (start by agreeing, this relieves the child’s emotional psychological pressure) This is obviously getting pretty upsetting for you. (Intent to Understand) I’m sorry. (Invitation or Repair; I’m sorry/it’s okay” call-and-response) So, okay, I’ll leave you alone. (additional reassurance that the stress will soon end) But I need something from you before I go (Intent to Task will increase the child’s stress again)

Ch: What? (the child might be barely holding on at this point, the task must be small, it’s only symbolic; i.e., that the child acknowledges your authority to direct the child’s behavior)

Par: I need you to take your dishes to the kitchen for me. If you do that for me, then I’ll leave you alone. (small task, easily accomplished)

Ch: Fine. (the child is relieved that it’s a small task, easily accomplished, and readily agrees to get you to leave and so achieve a reduction in the child’s stress level)

My preferred negotiated task would be a hug. However, this can be hard to achieve sometimes, but it’s extremely valuable if it can be negotiated.

Ch: Get out! Just leave me alone.

Par: Okay, I can do that. (agreement to reduce stress) But I need something from you before I go. (introduce the negotiation counter demand)

Ch: What?

Par: I need a hug. If you give me a hug, I'll leave.

Ch: No, just get out.

Par: If you want me to leave, give me a hug, if you want me to stay so that we can talk some more, don't give me a hug and I'll stay to talk more. It's up to you.
(calm and confident parental authority)

Ch: No, just get out, now!

Par: A quick hug and I'm gone. (calm and confident parental authority)

Ch: I don't want a hug from you.

Par: I understand. But I love you and I still think you could use hug. (Intent to Be-With) I know I could sure use one. (Intent to Be-With) One quick hug and I'm gone. (Invitation to Repair). Or if you want me to stay so we can talk some more, don't give me a hug. It's up to you; you're choice.

Ch: Fine, here. Now just get out.

Par: Okay, thanks.

Reason: Hugs have a bundle of benefits. Symbolically, hugs close the repair component of a "breach-and-repair" sequence, so that introducing the hug before leaving is consistent with the ultimate goal of establishing effective breach-and-repair communication sequences with the child. Hugs also communicate affectionate bonding, so that the child begins the separation period with a very slight pop of emotional bonding, perhaps miniscule, but nevertheless present.

The Happy emotional channel, in which love resides, is a bi-directional circuit. The top half of this circuit is receiving love from the other person, the bottom half of this emotional circuit is loving the other person and seeing our love be accepted. The "insincere" hug of the child will barely open the bottom half of the circuit, but being hugged by the parent will open somewhat the top half of the circuit. So while the child might half-heartedly and only superficially give a hug, the child will nevertheless be receiving our hug whether the child "wants it" or not.

In addition, by simply engaging in the act of giving affection, the bottom half of the loving circuit, i.e., giving love and having it be accepted, is ever so slightly opened. The authentic child wants to love the rejected parent, but can't because of the distorted family dynamics. Opening the bottom half of the loving circuit, even if ever so slightly, relieves emotional pressure within the authentic child and encourages an increasingly authentic self-experience.

Furthermore, when we are stressed, we could use a hug of support. After a round of ju-jitsu parenting communications, the child is likely stressed, which is why the child is tapping-out. The authentic child needs a hug. We are providing a hug, i.e., affectionate support, to the authentic child we love, even if the surface angry and rejecting child says he or she doesn't want a hug.

Gentle persistence from a low-level happy, relaxed, brain state may entice the child's agreement. Force and power from an assertive (low level angry brain state) is problematic.

Child Demands that the Parent Leave

If the child demands that the parent leaves, and the parent leaves, the child is dominant and over-empowered.

- If the child demands that the parent leaves, and the parent and child negotiate the parent's leaving, then they have achieved mutuality in their relationship, which is a sign of mutual respect for the authenticity of both persons.
- If the child demands that the parent leaves, and the parent negotiates a condition from the child, and the child submits to fulfilling the condition, then the child's submission to the parent's condition tacitly acknowledges the parent's authority.

If the child is emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed and demands that the parent leaves, and the parent **doesn't** leave, the child may explode into angry aggression.

Each situation and relationship is different, and whether to negotiate, for what to negotiate, and how persistently to negotiate are all variable factors within the unique specificity of any given relationship at any given time.