

## Op-ed Spotlights Parent Alienation Syndrome

I applaud Amy Neustein's Sept. 1 op-ed for highlighting the highly destructive, often irreparable harm caused to children by family courts ("Mothers Who Report Abuse Still Losing Custody 'at Staggering Rates'"). Parent alienation syndrome has been debunked as junk science, yet courts continue to rely on it and discriminatory stereotypes of women as "hysterical, vindictive and manipulative" to disbelieve mothers and place children with abusive fathers.

Research shows that when fathers claim parental alienation, courts are more than twice as likely to disbelieve claims of abuse by mothers and nearly four times more likely to disbelieve allegations of child sexual abuse. The consequences are dire: Children are placed with an abusive parent and deprived of a foundational relationship with their loving mother.

Mothers are now told not to raise allegations of violence or abuse for fear of losing their children, and once parent alienation is invoked, there is no way out except to deny abuse that is real. This has a lifelong impact on children, who should be the center of every custody decision.

As a pro bono lawyer who has tried to assist mothers seeking custody of their children, I urge others to join this important fight to give a voice to these children and their resilient, devoted mothers. **JE**

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