

For Therapists and Parents Working with Children of Narcissists (CON's)

Concerned parents who have left their partner who they perceive has NPD behaviour ask me 'How do I protect my children, they still have to see the parent with NPD, it is court ordered.' And "They are trying to do parental alienation what do I do?"
I am not a lawyer and every country is different so I cannot comment on legal avenues etc.

Psychologically the best thing to teach you kids is this:
Words are easy to say. Don't believe everything you hear, adults lie too. Instead learn how to test it.

The tests:

- What are the actions of this person over a long period of time (3-6 months)? Do the actions back up the words or are they different?
- Does this person usually have actions that match the words?
- Do the other people involved have actions that match up with their words?
- What evidence can you find by asking others, as many others as you can?
- What evidence contradicts other things said?

For working with littlies teach them using games to be detectives.
For example teach them to read body language and body ways more than words by playing an adapted version of hot and cold.

The game hot and cold: hide something in a very difficult hiding spot. Get the kids to move around and look for it. They have to ask am I closer and you answer hotter if they are closer and colder if they are further away. The twist or adaptation is you use body language such as shaking with your arms crossed over your body for cold and wiping your brow for hotter. The hard part now is you the hider, have to mix up saying the same word as action sometimes and other times say the opposite word and action.

The kids learning is most effective if you play a few rounds the right way first with words only then words and actions which match up then games with just actions then games with words and actions again. Once that pattern is set and they are used to it, introduce the mismatching without telling them and see how much they pick up. Remember it's about having fun and learning by doing. Can they learn to watch what you are doing even when your words are trying to fool them?

Don't be afraid to tell your kids the truth. That doesn't mean run their other parent down but it does mean saying things like don't believe everything you hear and no that's not true so you might need to ask many more people to get to the truth.

Getting to the truth

Speaking of get to the truth. Another game for littlies is to break up a jigsaw puzzle (I just chop a complex detailed picture from a magazine or one I print). The I get a non permanent marker or a pen that can draw eyes on your hand I use puppets for this but coloured socks work. First hide the puzzle pieces. The child had to ask each (puppet) what the puzzle is a picture of and find out as much information as they can about what the picture is and where to look for pieces. Some puppets lie, some tell the truth. Some try to instead make the conversation about them and others try to get the child to give them their favourite toy and play with that instead (so the child learns to recognise diversion). Each puppet gives the child clues about where it is hidden but some may lie first. Remember if you lie to do something in your body language opposite to the lie eg say no while nodding yes or say I have no idea while pointing to an area to look for the puzzle. Each puppet asks the child what they think the puzzle is a picture of or what the puzzle is about before they tell the child more about it. Thus the child experiences the building of clues process. This game is complex and needs to be played a lot over time, as do all these games to teach children to spot truth and lies.

Get the child to build the picture as they find each piece – older kids need more pieces but you can hide the puzzle in clumps for older kids rather than 1000 different places.

Stories about emotional responsibility

Another difficult thing to teach kids but is essential for minimising parental alienation and for building a child's resilience against parental alienation is to teach them what they are emotionally responsible for. This can be done by making up stories about animals or friends or something not directly their family and story in how one puppy makes all the others feel guilty because he is sad, or mad or bad. Then the other puppies learn one day from a wise old owl that they are not responsible and actually, only that puppy can make him or herself feel better and only that puppy is responsible for its own feelings and not for others. But all puppies are responsible for doing things in a kind way, but saying no is kind too. See how you go making up stories with much more detail than this and feel free to send them in.