
The Unintended Trauma of Divorce

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Divorce Stats

50% of all marriages end in divorce

- 41% of first marriages
- 60% of second marriages
- 73% of third marriages

72% of divorce occurs within the first 14 yrs

- average is 8 years

60% involve individuals aged 25 - 39

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Experiencing verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Experiencing physical or emotional neglect
- Being unloved or unprotected
- Losing parent through divorce, abandonment or other reasons
- Living with an alcoholic or drug-addicted parent
- Living with a depressed, mentally ill or incarcerated person
- Witnessing violence against one's mother

Divorce at different stages

Toddlers and infants have memories

Preschoolers need concrete information

Elementary kids feel powerless

Older kids blame themselves

Effect of Divorce on Children

Young Children:

Understanding and worry parents may stop loving them

Grade School:

Fear the divorce was their fault

Teenagers:

Became angry, blame or resent the parent/s

What is High Conflict?

Low-level conflict: Issue focused

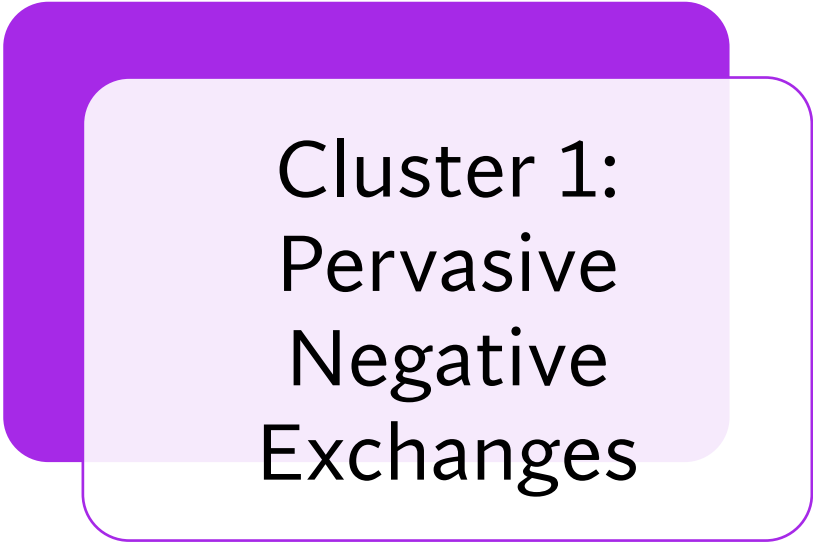
Medium-level conflict: blaming and reactivity

- Carried over from family of origin experiences

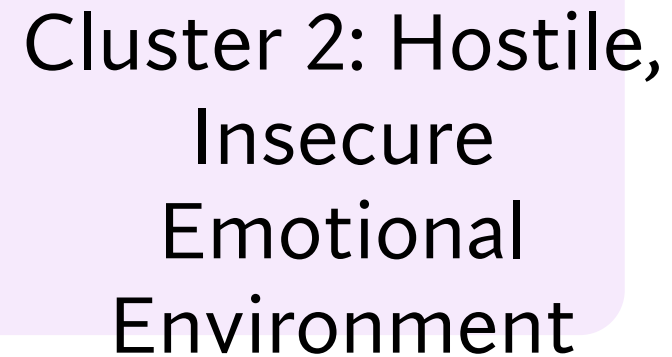
High-level conflict: Chronic

- High degree of emotional reactivity
- Blaming and vilification
- Inability to take responsibility for their own role

High Conflict



Cluster 1:
Pervasive
Negative
Exchanges



Cluster 2: Hostile,
Insecure
Emotional
Environment

Conflict and Stress

1

Positive Stress

- Short lived

2

Tolerable Stress

- Large event, aided by supportive relationship/s

3

Toxic Stress

- Strong frequent and prolonged adversity without adequate adult support

Effects on
the
professionals

Vicarious trauma

Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

Tips for clinicians



Be aware of own unresolved issues and current life stressors



Seek counseling when necessary



Set good boundaries

Tips for parents

1

Keep conflict
away from the
children

2

Communicate
with co-parent

3

Put the children
first, not in the
middle

4

Spend more
intentional time
with children

References

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