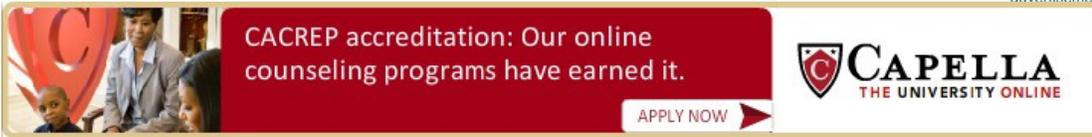


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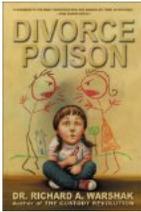
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DIVORCE

Divorce Poison

by Richard A. Warshak
Regan Books, 2002

Review by James E. de Jarnette, Ph.D. on May 8th 2003



Every divorce attorney and every therapist dealing with any family or family member who is dealing with recent divorce issues, should recommend this book *Divorce Poison* written by Richard A. Warshak, Ph.D. It speaks directly to the issue of parental alienation without getting involved with the mental health wars as to whether or not the eminent Dr. Richard A. Gardner is correct or not correct calling

parental alienation a syndrome or some other type of clinical configuration.

This book brilliantly brings home the fact that when divorce happens the children get hurt. In his introduction, Warshak defines the focus of the book as being, "on those children whose rejection of one parent results primarily from the other parent's influence...This book explains why the common approaches are impotent, why doing nothing will accomplish nothing, and why relying primarily on reasoning is an unreasonable approach to the problem."

In one of the most wonderful chapters, chapter 7, entitled *Poison Control*, Dr. Warshak states most emphatically, "Love is not enough. It is not enough to protect children from divorce poison. And it is not enough to reverse its pernicious effects."

This reviewer is a private practice Child Custody Evaluator in Los Angeles County and in several counties surrounding that area. As an expert witness for the Superior Court's Family Law Court, the effects of *divorce poison* are all too frequently clear. By the time a case reaches the point of needing a child custody evaluation, it is this reviewer's experience that 90%+ of the time there are issues of parental alienation that has adversely affected the child or children.

This book, *Divorce Poison*, clearly and in easy-to-understand language talks to the parents about how their behavior effects the best interests of their child. How it affects the overall psychological and physical well being of the child. From what we now know through the combined efforts of the neurosciences, psychology, psychiatry, family counseling, child development professionals, family law courts, and child custody experts, the harm inflicted upon a child or teenager during this most critical time of divorce can and does have effects that last over the entire lifespan of the child or youth involved.

The case histories that Warshak uses more than adequately bring home to the reader the bridge between psychological theory and research, and life-experience fact. The examples are ones that this reviewer sees over and over again and will have the ring of reality even to the parent that is unconscious of the harm that he or she is co-creating.

Sometimes a parent uses a child's apparent good adjustment to keep the other parent at arm's length. The argument goes like this: If good grades; stays out of major trouble; and claims to be happy, why rock the boat? Why require the child to relate to the other parent? This is often

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punctuated by a warning that this "well-behaved" child has threatened to run away if forced to have contact with the hated parent...Too many therapists endorse this misguided thinking. (Pgs. 204-205)



Along with the case histories, there are sections within each chapter that are specially highlighted giving direct and clear suggestions entitled most appropriately *Take Action*. Suggestions contained in these special areas are not esoteric but are very specific and always grounded in the years of experience that Warshak has had in the child custody arena.

To the professionals reading this review on this site, this reviewer urges you to get a copy of this book. It may or may not be new information to you. However, it is an enjoying and enlightening read and is a book that you will recommend to the people with whom you work.

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Divorce Poison offers specific advice to protect children from the results of their parents' animosity. In it, you will learn how to:

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- answer rude and hateful behavior
- insulate children from the harmful effects of bad-mouthing
- identify and correct your own contributions to parent-child conflicts
- defend against false accusations of brainwashing
- choose the best therapist and lawyer
- reconcile with children after years of estrangement.