



CHECKLIST & WORKBOOK

# Post-Separation Abuse

WITH SPECIALIST DIVORCE COACH  
DANIELLE BLACK





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Hi, I'm Danielle.

I'm who Australian women turn to when 'conscious uncoupling' or 'amicable' separation doesn't seem like a genuine option.

I help women stay sane, take back control, and heal, while dealing with high-conflict separation, divorce and co-parenting. Yes, it's possible!



# About Danielle

Today, I'm on solid ground. I remarried over 10 years ago and I'm living the life I always dreamed of - a loving, healthy, supportive marriage with a horde of happy, healthy kids. There **is** life after high-conflict separation, divorce and court-proceedings! I'm very much a product of the processes and strategies that I now offer to teach my clients.

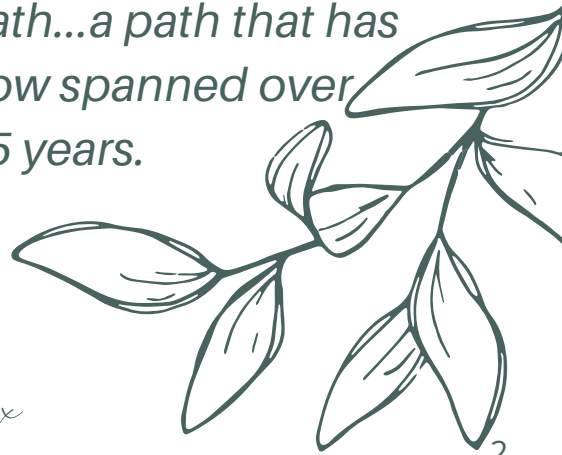
In terms of post-separation abuse, it took me a long time to work out exactly what I was experiencing. Things have progressed a lot since then, but 15 years ago family violence wasn't something that was often spoken about, and I'm not sure that the term 'post-separation abuse' had been used at all back then.

I hope this comprehensive ebook, with checklist, helps you make sense of some things that are going on for you. If you decide that you would like more support, *please reach out.*

We are stronger, and braver, **together.**

*Danielle x*

*If you're struggling right now, I get it. More than I can put into words. I've had many struggles navigating my own post-separation path...a path that has now spanned over 15 years.*



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# How it works...

## 3 Steps

This is a sneak-peek look at the kinds of documentation that my coaching clients do when they work with me, specifically documenting the patterns of behaviour of their former partner, and making links to the negative impacts on any children you share.

**Identifying patterns of behaviour is very important if you ever end up in court with your ex, especially where parenting matters are concerned.**



### Checklist

Print out the checklist if possible, or write down, type, or 'copy & paste' all of all the behaviours that you have witnessed or experienced from your partner or ex-partner.



### Behaviour Patterns

What are the main behaviour categories that your ex-partners' behaviour fits into? Think about current and past behaviour. Take note of the top 3 or 4 categories.



### Ongoing Documentation

Write or type the main behaviour categories, and for each category add 5-10 specific examples that you and/or your children have experienced (this can include events from years ago too). Include as much detail as you feel comfortable with, including dates and times. This is purely for your own documentation unless you decide to share this with someone, such as the police, your lawyer, your therapist or your divorce coach.

**Expert Tip:** Ensure that your documentation cannot be seen or accessed without your permission. If you're not sure whether the person abusing you has direct or remote access to your phone or computer, consider writing everything down in a notebook and keeping the book carefully hidden, or entrusting it with a close friend.



# What is Post-Separation Abuse?

Post-separation abuse is a term used to describe abusive behaviour that continues after a couple has separated and/or divorced.

If you are separating from, divorcing and/or co-parenting with a high-conflict person, a certain amount of conflict is unavoidable.

This is because high-conflict abusers thrive on causing *chaos, conflict and confusion.*

A high-conflict person can make it difficult for anyone on the outside looking in to work out who is responsible for the conflict during separation, divorce and co-parenting. This is one reason why working with a specialist High-Conflict Divorce Coach is important.

Often the term 'high-conflict divorce' is used by the legal profession, instead of referring to 'post-separation abuse'. This is partly because it can sometimes be hard to tell who is responsible for the conflict - is it one of you, *or both of you?* This is where working with a specialist High-Conflict Divorce Coach can help.





# Post-Separation Abuse *continued...*



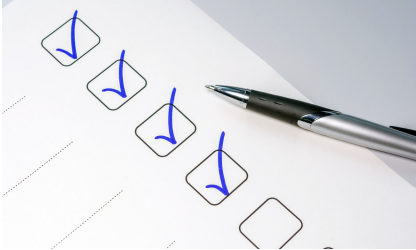
Make no mistake, an abuser  
*knows what he's doing.*

His behaviour is deliberate, and  
is designed to *gain and  
maintain control.*

Please note, throughout this guide high-conflict people are referred to as: high-conflict people, the abuser, the abusive parent, the high-conflict parent, the HCP, the HC parent etcetera. Male pronouns are consistently used for the high-conflict abuser. This is not to suggest that females do not perpetrate abusive behaviour, rather it is for both convenience and factual accuracy as my clients are women and the majority of victims of family violence and post-separation abuse are women. Statistically, the vast majority of perpetrators are men.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist

\*\*Many of these behaviours are also common **before** separation\*\*



## Prior Behaviour

- Coercive control
- Emotional abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Physical abuse
- Financial abuse
- Intimidation
- Denying, blaming & minimising
- Entitled attitudes & behaviours

## Harassment & Intimidation

- Using looks, physical size and body language to create fear or unease.
- Destroying or withholding belongings.
- Overt or implied threats of suicide or self-harm.
- Overt or implied threats to harm the other parent and/or children.
- Overt or implied threats to 'kidnap' children and/or references obtaining 'sole custody'.
- Threats of harm/neglect or actual harm/neglect to animals and/or family pets.
- Repeatedly disregards boundaries and personal space of other parent and/or children.
- Bombards other parent and/or children with emails, calls and/or messages.
- Monitors movements and interactions of the other parent and/or children. This could be via 'cyber-stalking' such as placing trackers in cars, in childrens' belongings and via smartphones
- Makes presence known in person or via phone or other means under the pretense of being caring and/or using the children as justification for continued disregard for boundaries.
- Repeatedly attends the home or workplace of the other parent without invitation.
- Engages in technology facilitated harassment and stalking; including but not limited to: monitoring text messages, phone calls, emails, social media use and messages; uses tracking devices on vehicles or belongings, uses the 'find my phone' function to track location, uses dash-cam technology to listen in on conversations in vehicles.

“Abuse is not caused by bad relationship dynamics. You can’t manage your partners abusiveness by changing your behaviour. **But he wants you to think you can”.**

*Lundy Bancroft*



# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Minimising & Blaming Behaviour

- Denies the reality of the other parent and/or children and their experience of abuse.
- Accuses the other parent and/or children of lying, exaggerating or being 'too sensitive'.
- Accuses the other parent and/or children of causing the violence.
- Blames violence on 'anger problems'.
- Takes no responsibility for their own behaviour and use of violence/abuse.
- Minimises their use of violence and normalises it.
- Falsely accuses the other parent of violence/aggression/abuse.
- Recruits others to support their false victim narrative and to give positive 'character references' to authorities (police, child protection workers etc).

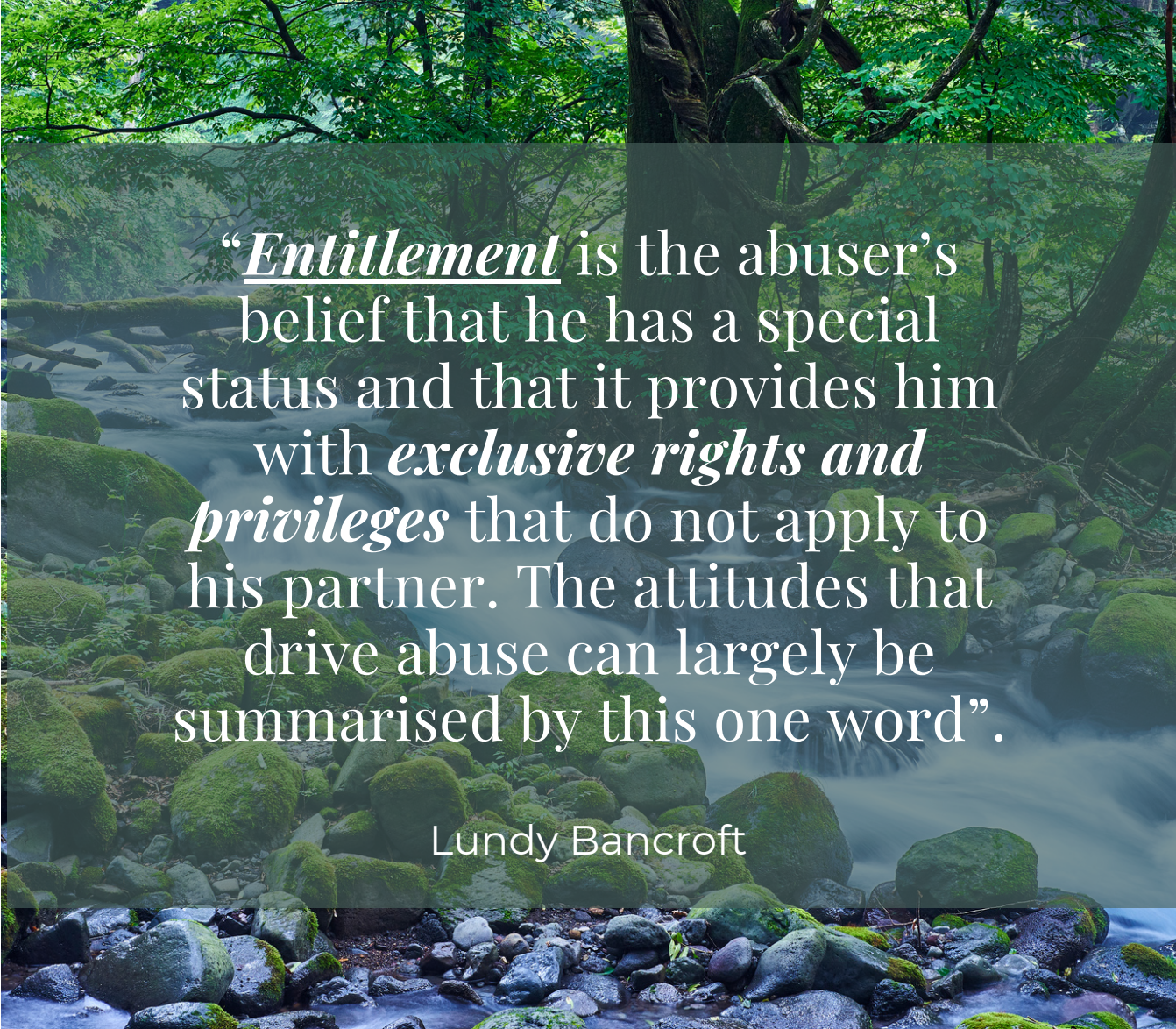
## Isolation & Recruiting Allies

- Convincing friends, family, new partners & others of their 'victim narrative' & encouraging them to think badly about, and distance themselves from, the other parent.
- Attempting to gain the support of the other parents friends and family to further discredit them and isolate them from any and all support.
- Discredits the other parents reputation at every opportunity; to school staff, other parents, neighbours, doctors, police and other professionals etc.
- Maintains control over the children's social activities and interactions and attempts to exclude the other parent and/or makes them feel unwelcome.
- Prevents communication between new partners and the other parent, even though open communication would be beneficial for the children (cannot risk the new partner seeing through the lies told about the ex-partner/other parent).
- Lies maliciously about the other parent and plays the innocent victim, despite allegations of family violence, post-separation abuse and/or child abuse (a very common and predictable tactic is to accuse the other parent of 'alienation' or 'manipulation' or 'brainwashing' of the children when faced with allegations of abuse. These lies can often be easily refuted and is something we can discuss in coaching sessions.) .

**\*\*During the relationship, it is common for abusive men to make spending time with friends or family difficult for you. They may refuse to come with you and be emotionally needy in your absence with text messages or phone calls, or insist on coming with you and refusing to give you any time alone with others. They may accuse you of cheating, or putting others first. All of this behaviour is to *train* you to isolate yourself, because of the drama that happens when you spend time with others. This is control. This is ABUSE.**

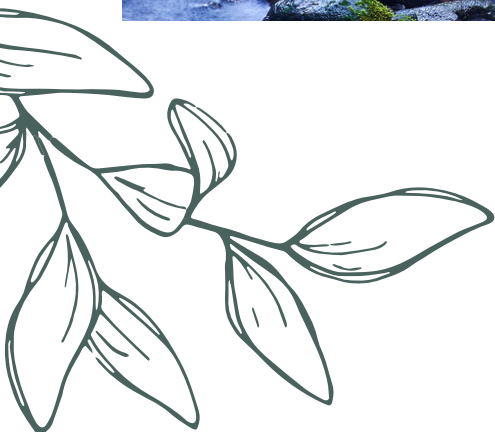
Abuse is commonly underpinned by  
a strong sense of

# Entitlement



*“Entitlement is the abuser’s belief that he has a special status and that it provides him with *exclusive rights and privileges* that do not apply to his partner. The attitudes that drive abuse can largely be summarised by this one word”.*

Lundy Bancroft



# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Using & Disregarding Children

- Involves children in the conflict in a variety of ways, and discusses parenting issues and/or arguments with the children or in front of the children.
- Blames the other parent for the relationship break-up ("mum is breaking up the family" etc) and for the division of parenting time ("I'd love to spend more time with you but mum won't let me", "Mum doesn't love me anymore" etcetera).
- Uses children to pass on messages to the other parent.
- Uses children as a 'prop' to convey desired characteristics to others (i.e wants to demonstrate being a great parent or 'single dad' that has a great relationship with children when that is not the case in reality). Will alternate between seeking admiration and seeking pity.
- Disregards the best interests of children in relation to their age, personal views and developmental needs (prioritises 'winning', portraying a certain narrative to others, and taking revenge on the other parent instead of genuinely considering the needs of children).
- Disregards the views of older children on care arrangements and takes it personally when older children express a preference for a 'home base' with the other parent (i.e emotionally manipulates and/or punishes an older child for sharing honest views). Any close relationship with the other parent is viewed as undermining the superiority and ultimate authority of the high-conflict parent, and challenges their need to 'win' (for the abusive parent to 'win' the other parent is preferably shunned by the children.)
- Uses drop off/pick up as an opportunity to intimidate/harass/invoke fear.
- Expects the children to conform to specific gender, cultural and/or religious rules.
- Ridicules children's likes, dislikes, needs, wants, looks and personal identity.
- Blames the other parent for any behaviour or characteristic in the children that they find undesirable.
- Is emotionally cold toward children, especially behind closed doors, yet feels jealous of the children's warm and loving relationship with the other parent. May express a belief that the other parent's developmentally appropriate, nurturing and healthy affection toward the children is 'babying' them.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Using & Disregarding Children

- Encouraging/allowing new partners to use images of the children on social media, irrespective of the wishes of the children or the other parent, as a means to undermine the other parent and cause hurt. (i.e allowing new partners to portray themselves publicly as 'mother' to the children after a very short time, before any healthy genuine relationship with the children has been established.)
- Expects and encourages children to prefer the new partner over and above the healthy parent, and rewards/encourages behaviour that is hurtful to the healthy parent.
- Expects new partners and family members to perform parenting responsibilities (i.e expects new female partner to take on a 'mother' role and unhealthy false parent-child intimacy is encouraged very quickly between new partner and children. This serves a number of purposes including exerting control over the new-partner and avoiding parenting responsibilities for their own children that they believe are boring, beneath them or 'women's work'.
- Attempting to undermine the childrens' relationship with the other parent by way of forcing an inappropriate mother-child relationship with new partner.

“An abuser can seem emotionally needy. You can get caught in a trap of catering to him, trying to fill a bottomless pit.

But he's not so much needy as entitled, so no matter how much you give him, **it will never be enough**. He will just keep coming up with more demands because he believes his needs are your responsibility, until you feel drained down to nothing.”

Lundy Bancroft



## more about your ex's **New Partner**

It is important to know that any new partner of your high-conflict ex is likely to be either a victim of their violence and control and/or be a high-conflict person also.

Your high-conflict ex will likely double-down on efforts to discourage communication between you and his new partner because he cannot risk the new partner questioning his narrative about you and the facts of your past and present relationship.

It is not uncommon for abusers to claim that their ex-partner wants to get back with them, or lie about the true reality of the break-up. You will likely be described as 'crazy', a liar and as an unfit parent.

Commonly, new partners of high-conflict people may have no idea how often the abuser is contacting the other parent (their ex-partner). There is a wall of secrecy and the high-conflict person can be unrelentingly focused on their ex-partner, to the point of stalking and regular harassment, **and their new partner may be completely unaware.**

Make no mistake, your ex's new partner is not getting the "best" of him. He hasn't changed. It's all smoke and mirrors. You know the truth. Hold tight to that, and focus on yourself and your kids.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Undermining & Disrupting Healthy Parenting

- Often accuses the other parent of being a 'bad parent'.
- Disregards the views of older children on care arrangements and takes it personally when older children express a preference for a 'home base' with the other parent (i.e emotionally manipulates and/or punishes an older child for sharing honest views).
- Refers to the other parent in disparaging ways such as; 'crazy', 'irrational', 'stupid', 'unreasonable', 'lazy' etc. as a means to undermine confidence, to create and continue conflict and chaos, to paint a narrative for others and ultimately to gain and maintain control.

**\*\*A narrative is commonly created for legal purposes and abusers will tell their lawyer a very distorted version of events. When lawyers decide to 'run with' these distorted narratives, they are helping to facilitate further abuse against the victim-survivors.**

- Disruptive and dysfunctional parenting. High-conflict parents tend to parent in one of two ways (or both ways intermittently); 'fun, fast & easy' or overly strict and oppressive. 'Fun, fast & easy' parenting, as the name suggests, tends to include avoiding anything considered to be undesirable or challenging, such as the real 'heavy lifting' of day-to-day parenting that they consider to be 'beneath' them and/or 'boring'.
- Making degrading and disparaging comments to and about the other parent to the children, or in the presence of the children.
- Using children as 'spies' and messengers. Children may be questioned intently about the life of the other parent a means to gather information, i.e 'Does mum have a new boyfriend?', 'Where does mum work now?' etc.

- Attempting to isolate the children from the other parent on birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day etc. This may be done in subtle ways, such as claiming to have innocently made conflicting plans, claiming that the children have asked to stay with the high-conflict parent etc and will often contain an element of accusing the healthy parent of being 'selfish' if they insist on the parenting orders or parenting plan care arrangements.
- Coercion of children and others to align with the high-conflict parent and their narrative.

# The abuser as a parent



When children are subjected to abuse (physical, emotional, mental etc) from the high-conflict abusive parent they will often gravitate toward the healthy parent. This will enrage the high-conflict parent as they are unable to connect the dots between their behaviour and the damage caused to the relationship with their children. Commonly, the healthy parent will be blamed, and falsely accused of 'alienation', 'manipulation' and 'brainwashing' of the children.

However, children may also align themselves with the abusive parent because they are aware on some level that he is the one with the power and control and they don't want to be on his "bad side".

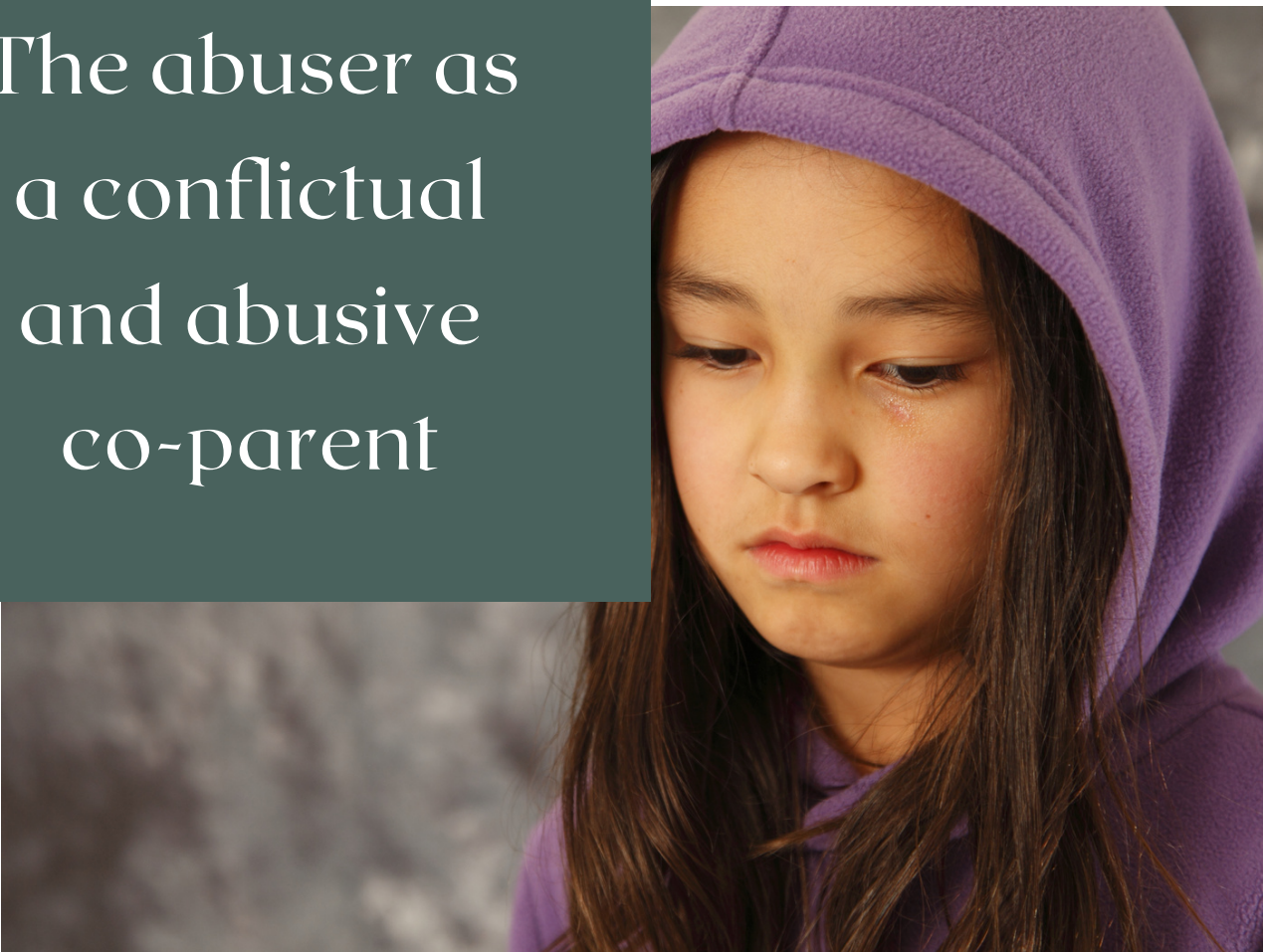
One way to understand this is to think about this in the context of a school bully situation. Some children will align with the bully, because it's better to be friends with the bully than to be the enemy of the bully.

In these situations, children may receive strong negative responses when they speak positively about the healthy and protective parent. They learn that the best way to keep Dad happy is to turn away from Mum.

No matter who your child appears to be gravitating toward, always remember that they are a victim of the abusive parents behaviour, even if the abuse has never been specifically directed toward them.



# The abuser as a conflictual and abusive co-parent




High-conflict abusive parents will blatantly lie about the wishes of the children, and will often actively influence and coach children, such as encouraging children to advocate for care arrangements to be “fair” and “50/50”. **This is despite the fact that prior to separation, he may have been a very disinterested father and may have rarely been involved in day-to-day parenting.** (His behaviour prior to separation can often be a good indication of his genuine connection to his children and parenting capacity, or total lack thereof.)


On the other hand, he may have been very enmeshed from the start and may have attempted to push you out of your parenting role.

Irrespective of past parenting patterns, children can often feel unable to share their genuine views regarding care arrangements out of fear of the abusive parent.

In most cases, equal shared care (“50/50”) **is not in childrens’ best interests.**



Equal shared care denies children a stable home base, and necessitates regular communication between parents, which increases the potential for ongoing conflict.



In situations involving historic family violence, abusers will often use parenting matters as a means to continue to maintain power and control over their ex-partner.



# Parenting arrangements



Controlling fathers are not motivated by genuine feelings of love toward their children.

They tend to be heavily focused on their entitlements and/or “rights” as a father, and view their children as possessions or extensions of themselves.

They can also be heavily motivated by revenge toward their ex-partner, however may present well and talk convincingly of “the best interests of the kids...”

It is important to remain assertive when discussing parenting plans and care arrangements (as opposed to being aggressive or passive).

It doesn't matter how many times you give in to the demands of your controlling ex - their behaviour toward you will never consistently improve.

Giving in will not encourage him to “calm down”.

If anything, his behaviour toward you will become worse if you adopt a passive stance because he will see that his abusive behaviour is rewarded because he ultimately gets what he wants.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Abusive & Neglectful Parenting

- Abusing children physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally and/or psychologically. This abuse is underpinned by themes of power and control and will likely will never be acknowledged by the abusive parent.
- Wanting/expecting children to behave older/younger than their chronological age.
- Infantilising children; chronically treating older children and teens in a way that denies their actual age and maturity in an effort to maintain power and control.
- Parentifying children; chronically treating children, and expecting them to behave and take on responsibilities, in a way that is developmentally inappropriate and denies their actual age, maturity and right to childhood.  
For example; children encouraged to become a source of emotional support to the parent, take on parenting responsibilities for one or more siblings, take on roles that are inappropriate for their age, maturity and development such as working (usually unpaid) in family businesses or on a family farm, provide care to a parent that may be chronically unwell or suffering from untreated mental illness and/or drug or alcohol abuse problems, being responsible for waking up a parent in the morning in order for the parent to get up and take them to school, cooking dinner for the family etc.  
Essentially, the parent abdicates adult tasks and responsibilities and expects the children to take them up. What is considered inappropriate will depend on the age of the child, for example a teenager preparing a few meals or doing significant cleaning tasks is very different than a younger child being expected to do the same.
- Exposing children to pornography, alcohol, drugs and inappropriate people and situations during parenting time.
- Exposing children to inappropriate movies, tv shows, video games, apps and internet content during parenting time (either deliberate exposure or exposure due to careless, irresponsible and disinterested parenting and/or as a means to 'win over' the child.)

\*\*Exposure to adult/sexual content is common 'grooming' behaviour.\*\*

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Abusive & Neglectful Parenting

- Will request (or demand) increased parenting time, including seeking "50/50" equal shared parenting time, even though their actions and life circumstances cause their intentions and motivation to be questioned. (i.e work commitments with no way of providing adequate care or supervision and/or placing children in care, or in the care of family members or new partners, living in the home of friends or family with no intention of providing appropriate accomodation.)

Regardless of their capacity to provide care themselves, or their interest or attachment to their children, high-conflict abusers have a tendency to seek more time with children as a means of hurting the healthy parent and "winning". Children are often simply viewed as possessions by high-conflict people. They may also demand more time with children, only to leave them in the care of others, or repeatedly change arrangements and make excuses for the fact that can't or won't make themselves available for the children.

- Repeatedly prioritises own needs and wants over and above the needs of the children and will out-source parenting tasks and responsibilities to others including family members and new partners.
- Ensures compliance and obedience from children by way of physical violence, intimidation, ridicule, threats, shame, manipulation and/or other forms of verbal, emotional and psychological abuse.
- The high-conflict parent may overreact to minor misdemeanors and normal childhood behaviour.
- Having a 'golden child' or 'favourite', and pitting siblings against each other. The 'golden child', or focus of favourable attention, can change often and be dependant on which child the high-conflict parent believes they can more easily coerce and manipulate on any given day or situation.

Abusive men are not good fathers.

# Abusive men are not good fathers.



High-conflict abusive men have a tendency to view their children as extensions of themselves and often have specific expectations regarding the development, personality, intelligence, interests and strengths of their children. Because they tend to view themselves as 'perfect', they often expect their children to live up to their ever-changing view of perfection.

The increasing individuation of older children (developmentally appropriate separation from parents and increasing sense of self with distinct opinions and interests etcetera) is often perceived as a threat by the HC parent and this is a time when all forms of abuse may escalate and when physical violence may be experienced by the child for the first time.

High-conflict people create 'enmeshed' relationships with their significant others, including their children. An enmeshed relationship involves vague or non-existent boundaries. In an enmeshed relationship with a high-conflict person, partners, former partners and children are expected to think, feel, believe and behave in certain ways that align with the needs and wants of the high-conflict person. In an enmeshed relationship, true independence on any level isn't possible.

Abusers feel threatened by boundaries of any kind, and tend to react badly if you attempt to create healthy, appropriate boundaries. Boundaries affect the control and power of the abuser and trigger their deepest fears and anxieties; feeling or being seen to be inferior and/or weak, feeling or being seen to be dominated by another person, feeling abandoned or feeling ignored.

In most instances, including infantilisation and parentification, the high-conflict abusive parent is placing expectations on the children to provide for **his** needs.

He is increasingly disinterested and dismissive to the needs of the children, and in his role as a parent in general. It is common for high-conflict abusers to have not been interested or involved parents before separation and to have left all the 'heavy-lifting' of day-to-day parenting to their partner.

Increased interest in spending time with children post-separation tends to be underpinned by the high-conflict abusers emotional needs, and desire to maintain control rather than any desire for a genuine relationship with the child.

# Controlling men are not good fathers.



Abuse and neglect toward children is often not outwardly noticeable, and it is common for children not to tell the healthy parent about their experiences. You must become an expert in your children's behaviour, and be on the lookout for things such as increased stress and anxiety that may manifest as; difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, school avoidance, repeated stomach aches, headaches and/or 'not feeling well' (and there is no known cause), changes in mood, becoming unusually defiant etc.

Confusingly for many parents, their child/ren may seem to align themselves with the abusive parent, and appear to be desperate to please him, even though they are being abused in some way. This can be distressing to witness and is something that my coaching clients sometimes choose to discuss in more detail during coaching sessions. There is also information on this topic in the Stronger Braver Together© online hub (lifetime complimentary access is given to clients who purchase a Coaching Package with me).

Whether his behaviour is ever specifically directed at his children or not, abusing the mother of his children is one of the worst things a father can do for the wellbeing and overall development of the children, including brain development.

Research demonstrates that men who are abusive to their partners are many times more likely to be physically and/or sexually abusive to their children than non-abusive men.

In one study, around 50% of abusive men were found to be physically abusive to their children, compared to approximately 7% of men who did not have a history of abuse toward their partner.

Research has found that abusive men are 6 times more likely to be sexually abusive to their children than men who did not have a history of partner abuse.

Abusive men tend to view partners, former partners and children (including step-children) as possessions to exert control over and often demonstrate patterns of behaviour that use children to meet their own needs.

**There is no evidence to suggest that the danger to children reduces after a couple separates and/or divorces. Rather, the abuser then may have time with the children without the protection provided by their mother.**

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Economic / Financial Abuse

- Preventing the other parent from getting, keeping or advancing a career. This can manifest in many ways and is often not obvious. Some common scenarios include: Taking on extra hours at work and/or getting a second job in order to keep the other parent at home looking after children; refusing to provide care for children thus preventing the healthy parent from going to work and/or attending university/tafe etc; refusing to agree to regular and predictable care arrangements in order to make it difficult for the healthy parent to make work commitments.
- Expecting the other parent to be responsible for a significant percentage of household expenses (groceries, utility bills, mortgage payments/rent, school fees etc) so as to reduce that parents disposable income and limiting their capacity to save money and/or support themselves and their children. This financial expectation can exist both within the marriage/relationship and also beyond separation. Financial hardship is one reason that many women return to abusive partners.
- Instigating and/or continuing court proceedings to drain the financial resources of the other parent. This includes instructing lawyers to write numerous unnecessary letters/emails. High-conflict people can also have a tendency to change their legal representation several times and can also commonly resort to representing themselves. (It needs to be noted that the high-conflict person will justify this behaviour and maintain that they are the innocent victim).
- Selling and/or transferring assets of the relationship without the knowledge or consent of the other parent.
- Withholding child support, including deliberately minimising their income (such as working for cash, reducing working hours etc) in order to reduce the amount of financial support they are required to provide for their children.
- Damaging assets of the relationship, or not adequately maintaining them.
- Gatekeeping access to money and other assets of the relationship. This includes stalling on the sale of assets, such as the family home, and/or a business or other asset.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Economic / Financial Abuse

- Damaging property of the other parent and/or children; such as vehicles, household items and appliances, technology items, children's toys, the family home etc.
- Refusing to contribute adequately to such things as; school fees, school uniform, school camps and excursions, sporting fees, sporting equipment and associated sports uniform.
- Lying about and/or hiding assets of the relationship, including bank accounts, superannuation, term deposits, shares and other investments.
- Draining shared bank accounts and/or other investments without the consent or input of the other person.
- Damaging assets of the relationship, or not adequately maintaining them.
- Gatekeeping access to money and other assets of the relationship. This includes stalling on the sale of assets, such as the family home, and/or a business or other asset.

# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Cultural, Spritual & Religious Abuse

- Using aspects of culture, identity, religious and/or spiritual beliefs to control, shame and/or belittle the other persons worth, belief, practices or traditions.
- The HCP prevents the children from learning about and participating in aspects of their culture and heritage.
- The HCP undermines and disparages the culture, identity, religious and/or spiritual beliefs of the other parent to the children or in the presence or hearing of the children. (i.e "Your Mum believes in Angels - how crazy is that?!", "Your Mum's accent sounds funny doesn't it!", "You don't want to go XYZ country with Mum, it's not nice there and you won't like it and she might not bring you back".
- Using aspects of the other parents culture, identity, religious and/or spiritual beliefs to undermine their credibility, isolate them and further perpetrate coercive control, such as weaponising beliefs about marriage and divorce as they may relate to a the beliefs held by a particular religion. (i.e "You will go to hell if you leave me", "You won't be welcome in the church anymore", "God won't love you if you leave me", "Mummy won't go to heaven because she broke up our family" etcetera).
- Threatening to "out" the other person as LBGTQI+ if they leave the relationship or as a means to control and coerce compliance after separation.
- Not allowing children to keep to dietary practices such as Halal or Kosher when that was previously observed when the relationship between parents was intact.
- Citing religious texts in order to "remind" the healthy parent and/or children of God's disapproval of divorce.



# Post-Separation Abuse Checklist



## Using Systems & Institutions to facilitate abuse

- False reports to child protective services, police and/or other professionals or organisations placing the non-abusive parent in the role of aggressor.
- False abuser-as-victim narrative to professionals, organisations and the court to shift blame and focus to the other parent. Even if not completely believed, this narrative can "muddy the waters" and potentially undermine the healthy parents credibility.
- Threats of "court action" or similar for non-compliance with demands.
- Threats of "court action" for implementing and maintaining healthy boundaries (i.e only reading and responding to non-emergency communication on set days of the week, not allowing the HCP into the other parents new home, assertively following the parenting plan or court orders etc).
- Disregard for parenting plans and/or court orders. HCP's detest boundaries of any kind - this includes court orders and parenting plans. HCP's tend to see these documents as impediments to their ultimate power and control, and may attempt to coerce the other parent into disregarding them. On the other hand, they may also stringently enforce them at other times in order to regain a sense of power, control, superiority and dominance. HCP's are not thinking of the best interests of the children - they tend to be fixated on control, causing chaos and on having targets of blame.
- HCP abuser seeks additional time with children, "sole custody" (this is not a term used in Australian Family Law), "50/50" care etc, even if this is not in the best interests of the children and/or would be practically unworkable.



# D.A.R.V.O

The process that high-conflict abusers often use to avoid accountability, undermine your credibility and as a means to continue abusing and controlling you.

**D**  
DENY

## Your reality is dismissed, disallowed and denied.

This is one the most disorienting and psychologically damaging aspects of communicating and interacting with an abusive person. Not only is the reality of your, or your children's, experience denied by the high-conflict person, as far as they are concerned you have no right to your own perceptions or opinions. When you are dealing with an abusive person, only one reality or perception of events is acceptable to them - **theirs**.

**A**  
ATTACK

## The high-conflict person attacks you.

High-conflict people often retaliate when they feel that you have questioned their superiority or have simply dared to assert yourself, set boundaries or call attention to their behaviour. Deep underneath their superior facades they often have very fragile egos and a low sense of self-worth. Superiority must be maintained at all times for the survival of their sense of self - and this means that others must be made to be inferior. It is often not enough for them to simply deny wrong-doing; they also feel the need to punish you for daring to question their ultimate authority. They are also prone to overreacting. Important Note: Abuse can take the form of physical violence as well as other forms (see the post-separation abuse wheel and checklist for examples.)

**R**  
REVERSE

## The high-conflict person portrays you as the perpetrator of wrong-doing, minimising and/or denying their behaviour and claiming that they are the true victim.

Your reality has been **denied**. You have been **attacked**. And now a new, **reverse** narrative has been created by the high-conflict person in which **YOU**, the true **victim**, are portrayed as being the **offender** and the high-conflict person claims to be the **victim**. This narrative will be told strategically to anyone who will listen, and is a way for the high-conflict person to maintain power and control over you by undermining your credibility with others, and further isolating you from anyone who may provide you with support; family and friends (including *your* family and friends), professionals such as doctors, police, your child's teachers and the parents of your child's friends ...no one is off-limits to abusers and the potential harm they can cause with their pathological lies, manipulation and abuse should never be underestimated.

**V**  
VICTIM

**O**  
OFFENDER

# High-Conflict Abuser Checklist



This is not an exhaustive list. A person does not need to demonstrate all of these behaviours to be described as 'high-conflict' or 'abusive'. All of these behaviours are abuse.

The more behaviour traits you are able to identify, the more likely that person has a 'high-conflict personality' and may have a personality disorder.

Research suggests that up to 15% of the adult population meets the criteria for a personality disorder, however much fewer are ever formally diagnosed as a defining trait of many personality disorders is an inability to acknowledge that they need help.\*

- A pattern of inflexibility and inability compromise, in conjunction with 'all or nothing' thinking. Compromise is viewed as 'losing'.
- A pattern of blaming others. After separation may exclusively target ex-partner and anyone who supports her, including family, friends & professionals.
- A pattern of minimising or denying their own wrongdoing, despite any evidence to the contrary.
- Finds it difficult to stay on topic during disagreements - will tend to launch into personal attacks on intelligence, sanity, character traits, appearance etcetera.
- Lies easily and often, including to impress others and also about things that can be easily verified as false. Will lie to avoid accountability and to portray the other person as 'bad' after a break-up. Doesn't demonstrate remorse when lies are discovered or challenged, will revert to DARVO.
- A cognitive distortion that is referred to as 'splitting' by mental health professionals. You will be viewed as either 'all good' or 'all bad'. You may have noticed patterns of this during your relationship - you are put on a pedestal one day, and another day you are ignored and verbally, emotionally and/or physically abused.
- Lack of emotional regulation. Can display intense negative reactions if they don't get their own way, with responses being out-of-proportion to the situation.
- Demonstrates an intense drive to control and dominate others, including intrusive behaviours.
- Demonstrates feeling entitled to behave the way that they do. Can appear to be striving to be "the biggest victim in the room".
- Appears to believe they are superior to others, even when their personal achievements are lacking or non-existent.
- Can be focused on retaliation or revenge, particularly to ex-partners. This relentless focus can sometimes last for years, even after they have re-partnered.

# Personality Disorders

The previous checklist and the below characteristics are the tip of the iceberg when it comes to 'profiling' the personality of your partner or former partner.

Part of my role sometimes involves supporting clients to profile the behaviour patterns and personality traits of their partner or former partner. If you would like support with this you are encouraged to book a Discovery Call via my website.

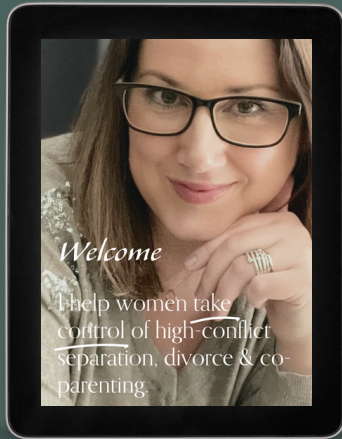
If your partner or former partner has traits consistent with one or more personality disorders, they will have displayed a number of traits and behaviour patterns over a long period of time.\*

They will also demonstrate the following:

- A lack of reflection and insight into their own behaviour (inability to 'connect the dots' between their own behaviour and the current or past circumstances).
- A lack of **long-term** change of unhealthy and dysfunctional inter-personal behaviours, combined with a denial that their behaviour is problematic or abusive.
- A history of inter-personal dysfunction and conflict, including problematic relationships with their family of origin.
- Importantly, as opposed to non-disordered abusers, personality disordered people will often harm themselves with their behaviour (their reputation, their employment, their financial situation, their relationships etcetera).

*\*Not all people with a 'high-conflict personality' have a personality disorder.*

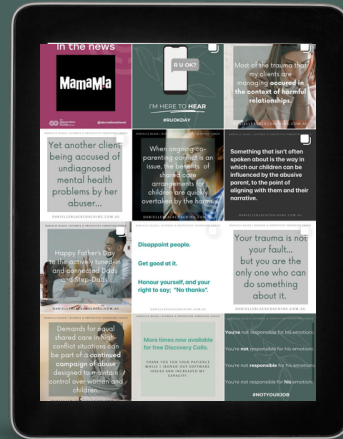
# Recommended Resources



## Website

[danielleblackcoaching.com.au](http://danielleblackcoaching.com.au)

This is great place to get more information about how I can help you, along with extra information about high-conflict people and post-separation abuse. You can also message me directly, and book your free Discovery Call direct from the website.



## Instagram

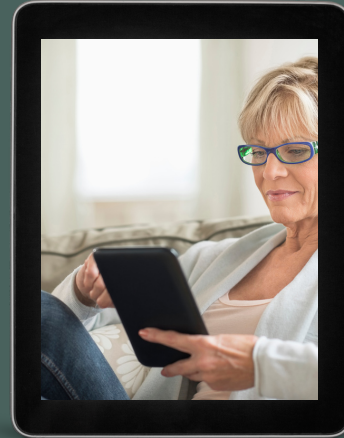
[@danielleblackcoaching](https://www.instagram.com/danielleblackcoaching)

I post on Instagram most days and I am always striving to offer something informative, inspirational, educational, controversial or a combination of all of the above! I'm an unapologetic advocate for women and children, and I'd love to connect with you!



## 1:1 Coaching

Coaching with me really is the best resource of all - my eyes and my brain on your situation. If you're ready for more security, more certainty and more stability I'd love to work with you. Book your free Discovery Call via my website or [here](#) and tell me about what's going on in your world.



## Group Coaching

A complimentary optional service for my 1:1 clients, Group Coaching is a great way to connect with other women who are navigating similar situations.

***Stay tuned for a stand-alone Group Coaching program that is set to launch in 2024!***

