

Turning Points For Families

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The research study of the Turning Points for Families (TPFF) program for severely alienated children by Harman, J. J., Saunders, L., & Affifi, T. has been published in the peer-review *Journal of Family Therapy*

***Sample 4-day Treatment Intervention at Turning Points for Families (TPFF)
To jumpstart the healing of severely damaged or unjustifiably severed parent-child relationships***

CAVEAT: this is a SAMPLE treatment intervention. But because all families are individual and particular, some changes may be made to the protocol to tailor it to a particular family’s clinical presentation and therapeutic needs

Treatment Summary by Day

Additional intervention: Should the family arrive in New York at a reasonable hour, Ms. Gottlieb (further referred to as the TPFF therapist) will take the family to dinner. This addition to the intervention has shown to be reassuring and comforting to the children. It also affords the TPFF therapist the opportunity to assess the presenting family functioning, assess for any concerns or possible issues, and to address any unexpected events that *may*¹ have arisen during travel.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
1. The child arrives at TPFF with the rejected/alienated parent; the TPFF therapist introduces	1. The rejected/alienated parent, child, and other participating	1. The rejected/alienated parent, child, and other participating	1. The rejected/alienated parent, child, and other participating

¹ Of the 140 children who had participated in TPFF intervention as of 6/1/2022, 134 arrived under the auspices of their rejected/alienated parent. NO safety issues or concerns had arisen during the travel—nor during the intervention. Despite an overwhelming number of these children having had a history of threatening self-harm, engaging in self-harm, and/or threatening to run away, there were no such incidents of this at TPFF. This is an exceedingly counterintuitive issue. But in brief, when the court imposes the order for no-contact with the favored/alienating parent, the child is freed from the loyalty web imposed by the favored/alienating parent. The child can then re-ignite the loving feelings and need for the rejected/alienated parent. These feelings and need have not been extinguished; just repressed.

<p>herself—if the family had been unable to have participated in the prior night’s dinner.</p> <p>2. TPF therapist inquires as to any concerns raised by the parent and/or children since the transition and addresses any expeditiously.</p> <p>3. TPF therapist provides a brief overview of the agenda planned for the four-day intervention and explains why she has entitled the intervention “A Therapeutic Vacation.”</p> <p>4. If the favored/alienating parent had written an approved letter in support of the relationship between the child and the rejected/alienated parent, the letter is read to the child, or the letter is given to the child to read.</p> <p>5. The letter must express the following: 1) support the reunification and the reasons <i>why</i>; 2) the parental qualities that the rejected/alienated parent has to offer the child; 3) why it is important for the child to have the rejected/alienated parent to meaningfully</p>	<p>members arrive at TPF.</p> <p>2. Feedback requested about Day-1 and discussion are elicited about the evenings’ events and of the memorabilia intervention</p> <p>3. Various videos that dramatize the family interactions occurring in alienation are played.</p> <p>4. Discussion of the events depicted in the videos that may—or may not—pertain to the family.</p> <p>5. Rejected/alienated parent displays appropriate affective reaction to the videos’ that dramatized the dynamics of alienation—virtually all of which the alienated parent had confronted.</p> <p>6. A discussion is initiated as the rejected/alienated parent attempts to convey his or her perceptions of family history and any distorted or incorrect beliefs child has of her or him.</p> <p>7. TPF facilitates the discussion and assures that the</p>	<p>persons arrive at TPF.</p> <p>2. Feedback is elicited about the prior evening’s events and reactions to Day 2’s therapy.</p> <p>3. Some clarification of the family history continues as needed.</p> <p>4. Interactive videos on the fallibility of human memory and the ease of planting false memories are played. The children love the challenge to their memories from the interactive videos. (The purpose of the videos is to convey that people are not necessarily lying when they have conflicting perceptions of events than do others.)</p> <p>5. Following the videos, there is a family discussion of how the therapeutic purpose of the videos to the intervention.</p> <p>6. After this discussion, additional videos are played of actual alienated parents and adult alienated children revealing their</p>	<p>persons arrive at TPF.</p> <p>2. Feedback is elicited about the prior evening’s events and reactions to Day 3’s therapy.</p> <p>3. Discussion of life with rejected/alienated parent for a period of time after departing TPF.</p> <p>4. Rules the child will live by are discussed with input from child commensurate with age.</p> <p>5. TPF therapist summarizes the course of the therapy.</p> <p>6. Clarification commensurate with child’s age is provided as to when and under what circumstances the child will have contact with the favored/alienating parent.</p> <p>7. Questions from child are entertained with alienated parent providing answers.</p> <p>8. Lunch determined by the family. TPF therapist takes the family to lunch.</p> <p>9. Afternoon activity. More pictures are taken and texted</p>
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<p>involved in child’s life; 4) that the child is safe with the rejected/alienated parent.²</p> <p>6. Extended family and significant others of the rejected/alienated parent are urged to participate in the intervention—but at the rejected/alienated parent’s discretion. If in-person participation is not possible, it is often accomplished via Zoom.</p> <p>7. The TPDFF therapist briefly clarifies the Program’s purpose and goals, but controversy is avoided on Day-1.</p> <p>8. The memorabilia intervention promptly begins with the use of videos, photos, cards, letters, gifts, etc. and other memorabilia</p>	<p>rejected/alienated parent sensitively corrects any of the child’s false perceptions of her or him without pathologizing the favored/alienating parent.</p> <p>8. All family members are expected to express opinions civilly and respectfully.</p> <p>9. The child generally does not relinquish the programmed script. But the child’s behavior and affect confirm positive changes. Ongoing positive interactions will eventually restructure the child’s negative programming and distorted beliefs, myths, and feelings regarding the rejected/alienated parent. The child’s empathy is nurtured.</p>	<p>respective stories.</p> <p>7. More family discussion of the real-life videos how they may or may not relate to this family. The rejected/alienated parent has been touched by the stories of both the parents and children and demonstrates appropriate affect. A goal of this intervention is to spark the child’s empathy for the rejected/alienated parent.³</p> <p>8. The child is absolved of having maltreated and hurting the alienated parent—recognizing that the child had been trapped in the “loyalty conflict” thrust upon the child by the favored/alienating parent. But from hereon in, the child must behave</p>	<p>to the favored/alienating parent and appropriate professionals in the case.</p> <p>10. Emotional goodbyes exchanged at end of the activity.</p> <p>11. TPDFF contacts favored/alienating parent to update on child and child’s departure and finalize any outstanding expectations of the parent.</p> <p>12. TPDFF therapist affirms her commitment to collaborate with the local therapists—the favored/alienating parent’s individual therapist and the family therapist for the rejected/alienated parent and children. TPDFF commits to being available to the family as needed—for court report on the therapy, to</p>
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² TPDFF makes the assumption of safety because the Court had transferred custody to the rejected/alienated parent after hearing the evidence. Or, if by settlement and then approved by the court, the favored/alienating parent and the Court had determined that the child is safe in the care of the rejected/alienated parent.

³ Nurturing the child’s empathy is an exceedingly important intervention. Because the favored/alienating parent has often modeled, encouraged, and normalized antisocial behaviors to maltreat and hurt the rejected/alienated parent, there is great risk to the child for developing an antisocial personality disorder—because this process squashes the child’s guilt for inappropriate behaviors and for hurting a parent. An antisocial personality disorder is virtually untreatable and irreversible once it becomes characterological some time in adolescence or in early adulthood. This very harmful effect on the child is one of many reasons why the scientific community considers alienation to be a form of child psychological abuse.

<p>indicative of the alienated parent-child relationship prior to the onset of the alienation. This is a symbolic, experiential intervention that is virtually always an ice-breaker of the child's resistance/rejection of the rejected/alienated parent.</p> <p>9. All family members are emotionally affected by the stroll down memory lane via the memorabilia.</p> <p>10. The child's increasing resistance to the rejected/alienated parent often pleasantly surprises the rejected/alienated parent.</p> <p>11. TPF therapist elevates rejected/alienated parent into role of co-therapist. According to family systems therapy, the therapist is a catalyst to the rejected/parent, who is the actual healer of the child.</p> <p>12. Rejected/alienated is best able to heal the child due to "relationship!"</p> <p>13. Positive affective reactions by all participants (including the TPF therapist)</p>	<p>10. The child is permitted to discuss any legitimate issues with the rejected/alienated parent—as long as it is done respectfully and civilly. False abuse allegations and the revisionist family history is discussed and corrected. The child is not permitted, however, to dwell on distorted thinking as is permitted in traditional reunification therapy. When that occurs, it perpetuates the alienation narrative and thereby perpetuates child psychological abuse.</p> <p>11. The alienated parent is not asked to accept the child's delusional opinions and beliefs and the consequent feelings based upon delusional thinking—doing so is anti-therapeutic.</p> <p>12. The child is sensitively guided to assume an age-appropriate role in the family hierarchy—commensurate also with the child's maturity.</p>	<p>respectfully and act age-appropriately.</p> <p>9. The rejected/alienated parent takes responsibility for assuaging the child's guilt and expresses forgiveness.</p> <p>10. Lunch again determined by the family. TPF therapist takes the family to lunch.</p> <p>11. Afternoon activity. Healthy family hierarchy is reinforced as rejected/alienated parent resumes an expands parental role.</p> <p>12. TPF therapist takes leave at dinnertime. Family is instructed to continue enacting their newly-recovered roles with each other.</p> <p>13. TPF therapist calls rejected/alienating parent to update and inquire about parent's progress towards goals so that the no-contact period can be lifted. Potential qualified therapists are explored who must document that favored/alienating parent is ready, willing, and able to support the</p>	<p>testify about the therapy if so requested; etc.</p> <p>13. In most situations, individual therapy for the child is CONTRAINDICATED—meaning forbidden. Individual therapy at this stage is only a forum for the child to vent the family script—which takes much more time to relinquish. As in any cult brainwashing, it can take upwards of two years to relinquish the script. A forum for the script will adversely affect the reconnection. To reiterate, behavioral change is what is important—not words.</p>
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<p>are evident as the family members discuss the memories that are rekindled by the memorabilia.</p> <p>14. Child's resistance to and defiance of the rejected/alienated parent markedly diminish.</p> <p>15. Child accepts rejected/alienated parent's parental role and authority (having already been initiated during travel to TPF.)</p> <p>16. Lunch determined by the family. TPF therapist takes the family to lunch.</p> <p>17. Afternoon activity selected by child and parent. Rejected/alienated parent is fully in charge of child, who is cooperative, pleasant, and responsive. The spontaneity of the activity overrides the child's programmed script regarding the revisionist family history and negative perceptions of the rejected/alienated parent.</p> <p>18. Rejected/alienated parent assumes parental role over child during the activity: as nurturer,</p>	<p>13. The rejected/alienated parent is facilitated in resuming her or his appropriate role in the family hierarchy.</p> <p>14. Lunch determined by the family. TPF therapist takes the family to lunch.</p> <p>15. Afternoon activity.</p> <p>16. The rejected/alienated parent and child deepen their affective connection that had been initiated during the prior interventions. They have begun the journey to resume their roles and interactions prior to the onset of the alienation. The activity—and experiential interventions facilitate the reconnection in a way that talking cannot do. TPF does not merely talk about creating new, healthy experiences. TPF <i>creates</i> the new, healthy experiences for the family to take home. Healthy family hierarchy is reinforced.</p> <p>17. The TPF therapist again</p>	<p>relationship between the other parent and their child.</p>	
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<p>supporter, advocate, supervisor, playmate, encourager, etc.</p> <p>19. TPDFF therapist takes pictures of the child or children during the activity and texts pictures to the favored/alienating parent and to the GAL or child's attorney if involved.</p> <p>20. Close of Day 1 at dinnertime: family members are counseled not to discuss anything controversial and to stay positive as they retire to their local accommodations .</p> <p>21. Family retires to their accommodations . Although the TPDFF therapist is available to the family 24/4 during the intervention, TPDFF has not been contacted for emergency assistance after the family and therapist separate for the evening and night.</p> <p>22. TPDFF therapist calls the favored/alienating parent to assure parent of child's adjustment. TPDFF therapist discusses favored/alienating parent's need for services in</p>	<p>texts pictures of the child during the activities.</p> <p>18. TPDFF therapist takes leave of the family at dinnertime. Reconnection is generally sufficiently stable for the family to continue discussions of the family history if they choose to do so.</p> <p>19. TPDFF therapist calls the favored/ alienating parent to update parent on child's adjustment and discuss efforts the parent is making to secure needed services to lift the no-contact period and to discuss letter correction, if applicable.</p>		
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<p>order to restore contact, such as individual therapy, parent education about subverting negative feelings for the other parent to their child's best interests, etc. If it applies, discussion continues as to what changes are needed for TPFF to approve the letter.</p> <p>23. TPFF therapist suggests that favored/alienating parent to make specific references in the letter to family events in order for child to recognize the parent's support for the relationship with the rejected/alienated parent. Suggestions are also made to individualize each child in the respective letters to address each child's individuality and the relationship the child once had with the rejected/alienated parent.</p>			
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