

**THE**  
**E**strangement  
**Arrangement**



**Twisted Lessons in  LOVE**

**P A T T Y A N N**

# THE **Estrangement** **Arrangement**

*Twisted Lessons in Love*

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## *Foreword*

*From ordinary to extraordinaire, the spotlight is focused on one family's very graphic estrangement. Openly shared, their plight gives a new twist to public performance. Their fate thereafter is an encore to stir your soul.*

*Walk the path of one estranged mother and your parental life views will be forever challenged. Estrangement exchanges parenthood values for questions with no answers. Unexpected outcomes become soul-building exercises that find no limits. Tempestuous disappointments build resistance, until surrender is the only option. Then, an epiphany surfaces: an evolution in triumph resulting from lessons learned.*

*Offered here are legitimate theories and persuasions to untangle the mystique behind this silent epidemic. Common-sense cures calling for action now can heal your heart. This book will reinvent your beliefs, as it will validate your own walk. This estrangement guide is unlike any other, and not one to be missed. **THE Estrangement Arrangement** awareness will leave you with new choices and healthy options.*

*All names have been changed except the author's.*

## **SAMPLE PREVIEW CHAPTERS**

# THE Estrangement Arrangement

## *Twisted Lessons in Love*

### Point of Reference

Really, there are no exact answers to be had. And this book fills no exception to the rule. But offered to you are some ideas and shared perceptions that were hard-won. See, I too am a survivor, as well as a participant in family estrangement, also known as **E** throughout this book. Additionally, I am a perennial teacher. My opening act is to decipher learning, compartmentalize it, and regurgitate it into digestible little lessons for others to benefit from. But more so, the bottom line is writing helps me heal. Purguing out words slipped inside sentences created a picture that made sense. The conversion of my thoughts into words was cathartic. Not only did it result in these books, but by going through this process, my healing exponentially escalated.

Truly, I did not set out to pen books about the estrangement process; however, reluctantly, my first book in this series set the pace. **30 Years to 30 Days :Estranged Children by Divorce** recaptured my story of divorce after thirty-two-plus years. I had made the decision to opt out. My children were sworn off from me. Their father coerced them to his side. They became angry, fearful, and believed I cheated them out of something more. They berated me. I reasoned their behavior away as being upset and spoiled, and downright disrespectful. Along the way, they asked me questions they were not ready to hear the answers to.



## Irony

Wikipedia defines *Irony* as an event characterized by an incongruity, or contrast, between what the expectations of a situation are and what is really the case, with a third element, which defines that what is really the case is ironic because of the situation that led to it. The term may be further defined into several categories, among which are: verbal, dramatic, and situational.

*Verbal, dramatic, and situational irony are often used for emphasis in the assertion of a truth. The ironic form of [simile](#), used in [sarcasm](#), and some forms of [rhetoric](#) can emphasize one's meaning by the deliberate use of language which states the opposite of the truth, denies the contrary of the truth, or drastically and obviously understates a factual connection.*

While Wikipedia gives us a full thought load, if you dissect each portion of the sentences, there is a flawless point well made. Estrangement is an irony in the perfect degree to this translation. Estrangement is a mix of passive-aggressive behaviors brewed into a situational drama that becomes an irony—an incongruity that only the levelheaded objective observer might be able to, or can, unravel.

# Lessons Learned

If you . . .

Choose to cry and whine, you have decided to be a victim;

Take vengeance for wrongs, you will be doomed to eternal misery;

Frustrate yourself with *what ifs*, you will live with regrets;

Make bargains, you dishonor your integrity;

Hate the world, you hate yourself.

If you . . .

Set acceptable boundaries, you achieve balance;

Choose unconditional love, you can find peace;

Stick by healthy parameters, you will heal your soul;

Hold an open mind, you will listen with flexibility;

Can forgive, you will learn acceptance;

Observe without judgment, you will access wisdom;

Seek to understand, you will know how to empathize;

Love yourself first, you will come to love others.

~Patty Ann



## A Thousand Why Mes

There is a point that all estranged parents come to and that is the questions—the number one question being *WHY*. Why did my child, or my relative, or my friend or other take the E action against me? Everyone wants an explanation, but there is no adequate answer for the *WHY*. It settles the heart, and mostly the head, just to know a reason. To stomp this *why* around until you are crazy makes no difference. Heck, our kids probably can't verbalize why they isolated dear ole Ma and Pa out of their lives. Their reasons may be many or few, to none. They may be justified or not. But one thing they did was make and carry out this decision.

There are as many reasons on both sides of the bridge for why estrangement occurs. The kids are selfish. The daughter is a drug addict. The son is a thief. The other side perceives another story. Mom is a religious fanatic. Dad is an alcoholic. The parents are too strict. The reasons are limitless.



## Broken Perceptions

It is difficult to say who benefits from estrangement arrangements in the end. Most will take a stand that estrangement is one big lose-lose for everybody; however, estrangement manifests in many forms. The simple explanation is that E results from one person's decision to no longer have a relationship with another. The deeper look can reveal many other meanings. Some of the reasons for E can be:

- \* Breaking relationship ties for setting a healthy boundary;
- \* Ostracizing or singling another person out of a select group;
- \* Feeling violated enough to break all contact;
- \* Being brainwashed by another party to the point of taking sides;
- \* Leaving dysfunctional relationships behind in favor of a new start;
- \* Alienating yourself from a perceived family failure;
- \* Taking a time out to regroup and gain emotional distance.





## From There to Here

Getting over estrangement may sound easy to a bystander, but those of us who have suffered E, we know best. Any earth-moving event, one such as this, the writer in me had to purge. For well over two years my computer diary was filled with words that eventually graduated to word heaven. My computer crashed. Guilty of sin number one, I did not do regular backups. While I hated to lose some good thoughts, other—better—words were waiting in the lineup. These fresh words became far more productive. The lost words recovered far more worthy replacements. To say those two years was not significant to this book would be an understatement. That time molded all that is said here.

Too much water ran under our family's bridge. Dirty water that turned downright filthy. Much of it was manifested from self-fulfilling prophecies of the most unfortunate kind. While I sympathize with those who endear estrangement, I now have even more appreciation for those who suffer dire fates in conjunction thereto. Follow my tale to a truly amazing aftermath.



## The Phone Squalls

After my computer puked, my thoughts on reviving another diary were one of ambivalence. Once there was twice enough. I didn't think it would ever be necessary to revisit that kind of pain. I had moved on. Forward march. Chin up. Steady as she goes.

Not so. The last two years sans kids, with all the pain of yesteryear and then some, came channeling back in a series of phone calls.

First a call came from my dear friend and close family ally. Urgently she told me that my son, Scott, was in a bad way and was currently with a nurse. The family genes exploded. Bipolar runs in our DNA. Scott was in his late twenties. A prime age coupled with genetics and stress equaled a recipe for mood swings.

My friend called me to see if it was okay if Scott could call me. Of course. After two years, the segue of bipolar was not welcome, but I was and always will be supportive. Scott was semi-coherent, talking in confused sentences and tip-toeing words around me



## **Anxiety Rules**

Months thereafter, the epic event's flu-like symptoms plagued my body. It was relentless. The ongoing fatigue finally, indeed, gave way to the flu. The flu and aching muscles were due to ongoing anxiety over the obvious stresses in my life. Once aware of this, I was even more cognizant to caring for my mental and physical health.

After the initial shock, I don't recall that Scott sitting in jail upset me too much. He was able to use that time for reflection. Selfishly, I had hoped he would have taken time to comprehend my position in the estrangement process. Although Scott was not cut off from family like I had been. Admittedly, Scott's jailhouse calls caused anxiety. There was also an adjustment to whatever form our new relationship would take.

Anxiety also came from an ongoing incomplete divorce. Scott's contribution ripped open all my divorce devils and overwhelmed me. Jake and I were still in the midst of two appeals, albeit two years past our divorce. Jake was ignoring the court order for making the payoff to me for my half of our house.



## Facebook

Facebook (FB) is a constant source of amusement. First and foremost, it acts as a weapon of mass destruction against estranged (grand)parents of the world. You can learn more from your children's posts on FB than you might uncover otherwise. My former family still resists including me. When flipping through family FB pictures, reminders hit hard. Pictures posing with their dad crowd out the rest. Not one of me, ever. That is a tale in and of itself. In fact, all pictures of my past life with my children are lost.

Early on, Scott confiscated all videos and photo albums I created. One day when I happened to be out, Papa Jake stood by and let our son commit one more infraction against dear old mom. Scott bluntly told me the photo albums were not mine. Now I can see that this was Scott's grab at preserving happier family moments. Sadly, the photo albums to this day are unrecovered. Scott abandoned all at his partner's house in the fury of his own misfortune. All the photo albums as well as the memories became assigned to the past, just as they should remain.



## **Stuck in the Family Tree**

Over the years since divorcing, friends could not resist sharing quips as to how Jake was getting on. The general drift was not favorable. While many people might relish the misfortunes of their ex, I did not. My desire was that Jake would heal himself mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. That he'd get on with living, and set an example for our kids that a healthier life is a worthy one. In other words, I had hoped Jake would get out of being stuck, as I had been.

Children eventually grow up and see their parents' folly. For better or worse, children are capable of coming to terms with their parents' misplaced conduct. Offspring can and do come to recognize parents are human and have needs of their own. They are not infallible. All children, young and old, are byproducts of both parents' genetics and behaviors. Recognition is key to changing unfavorable habits.

Parents do the best they can with the knowledge they are equipped with at the time. Children must learn to accept this fact, and ascend.



## Holidays

Another Thanksgiving has passed. I spent it with my siblings and our way-too-frail mother. It was pleasant and fitting. I do not know how many Thanksgivings there are left for my mom. I marveled at how we rallied to accommodate my mother's constant care. Her will is strong, but her body is not. In all aspects she needs severe assistance. I think of her now as she was at my age. She was free of child rearing, also divorced, and worked as a registered nurse. Travel was her passion. We had our differences during our life, but now none of it matters. What remains is just the precious gift of being together. That is all that is left. As I helped Mom on and off the toilet, I smiled, wondering if my kids would do that for me in my old age. I suspect not. Having an aging parent certainly puts perspective on priorities.

This holiday was easy. There were no exchanges of greetings from me to my kids, or vice versa. I didn't even think about it. Getting older does have some advantages. The pressures of the have-tos are not imminent. And, really, it is just another day of the year. I do wonder if I will ever regain the magic of these celebrated customs. Somehow, holiday excitement has slipped away.



## **Pack Mentality**

Estrangement starts between two individuals. Inevitably, others join in the blackball exercise, encouraged by a direct, extended, or fringe relationship to the perpetrator those extra joiners want inclusion. They need to be privy to the cause for sometimes undignified reasons. Often, when there is an incident, the estranged is abandoned by an offender who then coerces others to jump over to their side of the fence. Estrangement often spawns a pack mentality where the estranged is pitted against the original instigator and his/her followers.

Along with the ringleader, the separation typically drags along a spouse, children, siblings, friends, and if possible, the family pets. The angst puts a wide circle of discomfort around those who may not agree but go along with the estranger. Whether it is due to others' own fears, or trying to support their significant other, this enabling action eventually backfires.

When those in the circle take time out to observe, often they do not like what they had been a party to. Unfortunately, it is the distant relations, particularly the grandchildren, who hear half-truths.



## Puppets of Our Past

The more I observe, the more I know we are all just puppets to our past. Our learned behaviors are so deeply embedded and guide our psyches in almost every decision we own. Yes, we can change our behaviors. Many of us do. And many of us don't. Our gene pool, our formative years, and many other factors guide how we perceive our world—and how we choose to govern ourselves.

While this is not an attempt to explain away estrangement, it is to recognize circumstances that may lead up to it. We all are capable of enabling our offspring, or others, to take this E road less traveled. We brought our children up by example from our own pasts. We led our kids into the chamber by way of whom we married, whom we associated with, and whom we exposed them too. But our kids did not learn all their bad behaviors from us alone.

We walk a spiritual journey that builds our character. Perhaps our angels, and our guides, direct us from behind the scenes so we can fulfill our earthly contracts.





## Turn Your Page

Adversity is what builds our character. There is not one among us who by age fifty has not suffered some such incident that has knocked us for a loop. Suffice to say estrangement probably holds one of the all-time achievements in emotional hardships for most of us. Even if you don't have bipolar, estrangement is fraught with roller-coaster emotional mood swings.

At some point, however, it is time to turn the E page chapter of your book. Starting anew and taking what you learned onward is not only reasonable; it's a prudent way to live your life, going forward. Dwelling on what has been, could have been, or might have been does not make you a happy camper. Put a bookmark in that chapter from the past. Revisit it now and again. But do not live there.

How many of us are guilty of this? You are befriending a new friend or neighbor. Naturally, you both are curious about each other. What comes up in conversation? Where you have lived, your profession, and family of course.



## Boundaries

Setting boundaries for yourself has nothing to do with not being forgiving. The fact that you recognize your limits is part of the total healing package. So drawing a line in your life for what is acceptable, or not, should be a part of helping your ongoing self-honor and respect.

As for those of us living inside the estrangement triangle, we need to remember to keep being good to ourselves. We must retrain our minds to put our needs and wants first. By prioritizing, we will allow ourselves to keep healthy boundaries. After a lifetime of being a mother—any mom will tell you—the lines get blurred. Sometimes a person needs a slap upside the head before truly understanding where their own limitations lie.

Estranged relationships will take time to build back, but since there was a violation it may never go back to being the same way.

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