

THE EXTRACTION PATTERN

# The Family Court Survival Guide

When the system becomes the weapon –  
a practical guide for the UK family courts

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UK family courts – England and Wales

**Everyone I've spoken to says the same thing. You walk into family court expecting justice. You walk out wondering whether you've lost your mind.**

This guide is for anyone facing the UK family courts against someone with the extraction pattern. It is direct, practical and unflinching because the situation you are in requires all three. It covers how the system actually works (not how it claims to work), why an extractor will use it against you, and what you can do to protect yourself and your children within a system that was not designed for what you are experiencing.

**Important:** this guide covers England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have different systems. The principles of dealing with the extraction pattern apply everywhere. The procedural detail is jurisdiction-specific. This guide is not legal advice. Get a solicitor.

### **Critical: the language you must use**

Never use the word “narcissist” in court, in CAFCASS interviews, in mediation, in correspondence with solicitors or in any document that may be seen by the court. The moment you say “narcissist,” the judge hears “internet diagnosis” and stops listening. You are marked as the difficult parent, the obsessive one, the one who has been reading too much online.

The court has its own vocabulary. Use it. “Coercive control” is in the statute. “Pattern of behaviour” is understood. “Emotional abuse” is recognised. “Manipulative conduct” works. “A pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour as defined under the Serious Crime Act 2015” is what your solicitor should be writing. Describe the behaviour, never the diagnosis. “They present differently in public and in private.” “They agreed in mediation then refused to sign.” “The children’s behaviour changes after contact.” Let the pattern speak through the evidence. The judge who sees a documented pattern of behaviour is far more useful to you than a judge who has been told the other party is a narcissist.

This applies to conversations with your solicitor too. Brief them on the behaviour, not the label. If they are good, they will recognise what you are describing. Evidence is your friend. Presentation is theirs. Stay on your ground.

## **1. Why the Extractor Loves Family Court**

The family court is the perfect weapon for the extraction pattern. Understand why and you understand what you are walking into.

**It continues the control.** The relationship has ended but the court enables ongoing contact, ongoing litigation, ongoing extraction. Every hearing is a performance. Every application is a provocation. Every delay is a victory. For the extractor, litigation is not the obstacle. Litigation is the objective.

**It drains your resources.** Solicitors bill by the hour. Barristers charge per appearance. Cases consume tens of thousands of pounds – sometimes hundreds of thousands. Every pound spent is a pound taken from your children’s futures. The extractor has already calculated that your exhaustion is cheaper than their concession.

**It rewards performance.** The adversarial system was designed for property disputes, not for contests between someone who can feel consequences and someone who cannot. The extractor excels under cross-examination – composed, plausible, calibrated. They have rehearsed this moment their entire life. You disintegrate – not because you are lying, but because you are reliving. The system interprets your distress as unreliability and their composure as credibility.

**It enlists the state.** The extracting parent enrolls the power of the court to continue the destruction. The court becomes an instrument of ongoing abuse, and you must address it as “Your Honour.”

## 2. What the System Cannot See

Judges do not receive psychological training. They receive legal training. They learn statute, precedent and procedure. They do not learn to recognise the patterns that walk through their courtrooms every working day.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's 2025 report examined nearly 300 case files and almost 100 live hearings. Domestic abuse was identified in 87 per cent of case files – yet was central to only 11 per cent of section 7 reports. Twenty-four per cent of files contained allegations of child abuse; the figure appeared in just 2 per cent of reports.

Read those numbers again. The system sees abuse in 87 per cent of cases and makes it central in 11 per cent. The gap is the architecture.

Two imported American frameworks have shaped UK family court practice, and both fail you.

### Parental Alienation (Gardner)

Richard Gardner's Parental Alienation Syndrome has been rejected by the American Psychiatric Association, the WHO and every major professional body. It is not in the DSM-5. But the concept saturates practice. The parent who documents abuse becomes the parent who is "alienating." The child who is frightened becomes the child who has been "coached." The evidence of harm becomes evidence of hostility. CAFCASS assesses for "alienating behaviour." Judges weigh "willingness to facilitate contact" as though a protective parent's reluctance proves manipulation rather than fear.

### Coercive Control (Stark)

Evan Stark's framework is better science, but it is explicitly gendered – framed as "how men entrap women." The UK imported it and built legislation on it. The result: courts trained on Stark can see the coercively controlling father. They struggle to see the coercively controlling mother. The framework that was supposed to protect victims protects half the extractors instead.

When researchers measure underlying traits rather than count diagnoses, the gender difference in extraction patterns is statistical noise. Men and women carry these patterns at equal rates. What differs is presentation. Men more commonly show overt extraction – domination, aggression. Women more commonly show covert extraction – victimhood, manufactured suffering, quiet control. The courts are calibrated for one and blind to the other.

#### What this means for you

If you are a woman facing an overtly controlling man, the system may eventually see what you are describing – though slowly, expensively and imperfectly. If you are a man facing a covertly controlling woman, the system is structurally unable to process what you are experiencing. If you are in a same-sex relationship, the gendered frameworks have no idea what to do with you. In every case, the system rewards performance and punishes genuine distress. Know this going in.



### 3. CAFCASS: What You Need to Know

CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) provides reports to the court on children's welfare. In theory, CAFCASS officers are independent assessors. In practice, they operate within a structural loop that constrains independent assessment.

CAFCASS officers shape recommendations to align with existing judicial direction. The 2025 Commissioner's report documented this systematically. Once a judge signals a direction – often at the first hearing, based on limited information – the CAFCASS report tends to confirm rather than challenge it. The officer who contradicts a judge's preliminary view faces professional difficulty. The officer who confirms it faces none.

CAFCASS officers are not trained in extraction patterns, cluster B presentations or covert narcissism. They are trained in child development, safeguarding basics and – since Stark – a gendered model of domestic abuse. When they meet a charming, plausible, apparently vulnerable parent who presents as the victim, their training provides no tools to see through the presentation.

#### How to handle CAFCASS

**Be factual, not emotional.** The CAFCASS officer is assessing both parents. If you present as angry, distressed or obsessive, that is what goes in the report. Present your evidence calmly. Refer to documented incidents with dates and specifics. Let the evidence carry the weight your emotions cannot.

**Provide documentary evidence.** Don't assume the officer will investigate independently. Hand over your documentation – emails, messages, diary entries, medical records, school reports. Make it organised and referenced. If you make it easy for the officer to use your evidence, they are more likely to use it.

**Focus on the children.** The officer's remit is the children's welfare. Everything you say should connect to the children. Not "they did this to me" but "this is the impact on the children." Parentification. Anxiety. Behavioural changes. School performance. Specific, observable, documented.

#### Phrases that work in a CAFCASS interview

"I believe the children benefit from a relationship with both parents, provided it is safe."  
"When there was shouting in the house, [child's name] would hide under the bed and started wetting the bed again." "I've been attending therapy to help me manage this better for the children's sake." Always specific, always child-focused, always showing you support a safe relationship.

**Phrases that will damage you:** "He's a narcissist." "She's mentally ill." "I don't want them to have any contact." "I have rights." "I want full custody" (the term does not exist in English law). Never label. Always describe behaviour and impact. Everything you say can and will be quoted word-for-word in the report.

CAFCASS recommendations are followed approximately 76% of the time – meaning roughly a quarter are modified or rejected. If the report goes against you, you can request the officer attend court for cross-examination. Present counter-evidence. The report is not the verdict.

**Know your rights.** You have the right to see the CAFCASS report before the hearing. You have the right to respond to inaccuracies. If the report contains errors of fact, address them in writing through your solicitor. Do not accept factual errors because challenging them feels difficult.

**Do not expect CAFCASS to save you.** They may produce a fair report. They may not. Build your case as though the CAFCASS report will go against you. If it doesn't, that's a bonus. If it does, you are prepared.

## 4. Choosing and Instructing Your Lawyers

### Choosing a solicitor

Most family solicitors have never heard the term “covert narcissism.” Many will dismiss it if you raise it. You need a solicitor who understands the pattern – not necessarily by clinical name, but by operational reality.

Ask three questions. First: “Have you handled cases where one party uses the court process itself as a tool of control?” If they look blank, move on. Second: “What is your approach when the other party agrees to everything in mediation then refuses to sign?” If they seem surprised that this happens, they haven’t dealt with the pattern. Third: “How do you handle cases where the other party presents well in court but behaves differently in private?” The right solicitor will nod. They’ve seen it. They know.

**Beware the solicitor who pushes settlement at all costs.** Negotiation can work when both parties operate in good faith. Against an extractor, negotiation is another stage for performance. The extractor’s own legal team often knows this. Both sides know. In case after case, survivors report the same experience: five months of negotiation, agreement reached, the extracting party refuses to sign. Back to court. The bills continue.

### Instructing a barrister

Your barrister needs to understand what they are facing. Provide them with a chronology of the pattern – not your feelings about it, but the documented sequence. Dates, events, evidence. Barristers work with evidence. Give them evidence.

Be direct: “The other party is likely to present as calm, reasonable and victimised. They are likely to be highly plausible under cross-examination. Here is the documentary evidence that contradicts their presentation.” Your barrister needs this briefing because even experienced family barristers can be charmed.

### The other side’s lawyers

Extractors often find extractive lawyers. Not always – but the aggressive, win-at-all-costs solicitor and the barrister who enjoys dominating a courtroom are drawn to the same clients who reward those qualities. If the other side’s legal team seems unusually aggressive, personally hostile or willing to make claims they must know are false, that is data about the dynamic, not just about the lawyers.

Do not mirror their aggression. Your dignity under pressure is your strongest asset. The judge sees the contrast even when they cannot name what is causing it.

## 5. Mediation: When It Works and When It Doesn’t

The court will push mediation. Both solicitors will push mediation. Everyone with a financial interest in the process will tell you mediation is the right approach.

Mediation works when both parties operate in good faith. When one party is performing – using the process to gather information, to delay, to create the appearance of reasonableness whilst having no intention of reaching agreement – mediation is another extraction tool.

The extractor loves mediation because it is private, undocumented and rewards charm. There is no judge watching. No transcript. The mediator, trained in neutrality, cannot distinguish between two people who genuinely disagree and one person who is performing negotiation whilst the other is desperately seeking resolution.

### **If you must mediate**

Go in with written proposals. Insist on shuttle mediation (separate rooms) if being in the same room is used to intimidate or perform. Document what is agreed in writing before you leave the session. If they agree in mediation and refuse to formalise, that refusal is evidence. Keep it.

You are entitled to refuse mediation on grounds of domestic abuse, including coercive control. If your solicitor is not aware of this exemption, they should be.

## 6. The Therapy Trap

The court may suggest therapy. The other party may demand it. Their solicitor may propose a specific therapist. Every one of these situations requires extreme caution.

**Never agree to a therapist chosen by the extractor.** They will choose someone they have already cultivated, someone who has already heard their version, or someone whose approach they know will validate their presentation. Insist on an independent appointment. If the court orders a therapeutic assessment, push for a court-appointed assessor, not one proposed by either party.

**Family therapy is dangerous.** For the same reasons couples therapy is dangerous. The extraction-wired use therapeutic settings as intelligence operations. Your vulnerabilities, your children's vulnerabilities, become tools. The therapist – trained to see good in everyone – often cannot distinguish between a family in conflict and a family where one member is operating a fundamentally different system.

**Your own therapist is essential.** Individual therapy with someone who understands narcissistic abuse, coercive control and extraction patterns. Ask specifically: “Do you have experience with clients in high-conflict family court proceedings involving personality-disordered former partners?” If they redirect to “it takes two” or suggest you examine your own contribution, find someone else.

**Your children may need their own therapist.** Not the family therapist. Not the extractor's therapist. An independent child therapist who understands these dynamics. The court may resist this because it implies one parent is harmful, which the court does not want to decide. Advocate for it anyway.

## 7. Evidence: Your Most Important Weapon

Evidence is everything. The system cannot see the pattern – but it can see documents. Your evidence base is the difference between being believed and being dismissed.

### Start a diary today

Not a journal of your feelings. A contemporaneous record of events. Date, time, location, what happened, who was present, exact words used where possible. Send a WhatsApp to a trusted friend the same day – their independent copy is stronger than emailing yourself. Download the **Bright Sky app** (by Hestia, endorsed by NHS England) – it is disguised as a weather app and logs incidents securely. A diary started before proceedings is evidence. A diary started after looks like litigation strategy.

### What a good entry looks like

**Date:** Tuesday 14 January 2025. **Time:** 7:45pm. **Location:** Kitchen. **Present:** Me, [Partner]. Children in living room. **What happened:** I raised that [Partner] had not collected Mia from swimming as promised. He said: “I never said that. You're imagining things again.” I said I remembered clearly. He said: “You need to see someone about your memory.” From the hallway he said loudly: “Your mum's going mental again.” **Evidence:** WhatsApp to sister at 10:12am Saturday confirming he was doing pickup [screenshot saved]. **Action:** Entry made same evening.

**What a bad entry looks like:** “Tuesday evening – He gaslit me again over the swimming thing. He’s ALWAYS doing this. He’s a narcissist. I can’t take it anymore.” No date, no time, no quotes, no evidence referenced, uses a label the court has not found. A judge cannot determine what happened.

## Organise your evidence

The court will not wade through a box of papers. Organise chronologically. Create an index. Cross-reference diary entries with supporting documents – the text message that contradicts what they told the school, the email that proves the conversation they deny having.

### What counts as evidence

Contemporaneous diary entries (strongest). Emails and text messages (screenshot with date visible – messages can be deleted). Medical records showing impact on you or the children. School reports noting behavioural changes. Police reports. Witness statements from people who have observed the pattern. Financial records showing control or concealment. Social media posts that contradict their court presentation. Recordings – but get legal advice first, as covert recording has specific rules.

**Preserve everything.** Screenshot before they delete. Save to a location they cannot access. Back up to the cloud, to a friend, to your solicitor. Assume anything on a shared device can be seen or destroyed.

## 8. How to Conduct Yourself in Court

The courtroom is the extractor’s stage. They have been performing their entire life. You have not. This asymmetry is the system’s deepest flaw. Understanding it gives you an advantage even within a broken architecture.

### Giving evidence

**Be brief.** Answer the question that was asked, not the question you wish you’d been asked. Don’t volunteer additional information. Don’t explain unless asked to explain. Every extra word gives the other side’s barrister material to work with.

**Be factual.** “On 14 March, they sent this text message” is powerful. “They’re always doing this kind of thing” is not. Refer to your documented evidence. Dates, times, specifics.

**Be calm.** Your distress is real. The court will interpret it as instability. This is unjust and it is the reality. If you need a moment, ask for one. Take a breath. Return to the facts. Your composure – even imperfect composure – is your defence against a system that rewards performance.

**Don’t react to their performance.** They will say things in court designed to provoke you. They may cry. They may make accusations that are breathtakingly false. Do not react visibly. Your reaction is what they are seeking. Let your evidence respond, not your face.

### Answering cross-examination

Their barrister will try to undermine your credibility. This is their job. Do not take it personally. Answer honestly. If you don’t know, say “I don’t know.” If you don’t remember, say “I don’t

remember.” If the question is confusing, say “I don’t understand the question.” You are under no obligation to guess.

If asked a question that misrepresents your evidence, correct it politely: “That’s not quite what I said. What I said was…” Then refer to the document. Direct your answers to the judge, not to the cross-examiner.

### **Brief your barrister on their cross-examination**

The counterintuitive insight from litigation psychologists: when cross-examining a narcissist, **be deferential, not aggressive**. Ask open-ended questions that encourage them to talk. Flattery works because narcissists assume anyone who says something nice is being genuine. They will volunteer information, embellish, denigrate other witnesses and contradict their own statements – all without realising. The narcissist’s biggest vulnerability is overreach. Specific factual questions establish contradictions. Open-ended questions let the mask slip. Brief your barrister on both approaches.

#### **Special measures – you are entitled**

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, victims of domestic abuse are **automatically eligible** for special measures – screens, video link, separate waiting areas, separate entrances, and prohibition of direct cross-examination by the alleged abuser. Apply using Form EX740 within 14 days of the hearing date. You do not need to prove vulnerability – the court must assume it. If your solicitor has not raised this, raise it yourself.

## 9. Understanding the Judge

The judge is human. Overworked, under-resourced and seeing multiple cases a day. They have read your bundle – sometimes thoroughly, sometimes not. They are making decisions that will define your children’s lives based on what they can absorb in a few hours.

Judges are influenced by the presumption of contact – the legal principle that children benefit from a relationship with both parents. This presumption is reasonable in most cases and catastrophic in yours. The threshold for overriding it is high. One judge in the Commissioner’s report stated: “It is rare that the father is so vile that he won’t get some contact.” That word – “vile” – tells you where the bar sits.

Judges are also influenced by who presents better. This is not cynicism – it is human cognition. When one party is composed and plausible and the other is distressed and inconsistent, the brain reads composure as credibility. No amount of legal training overrides this. Your evidence must do the work that your presentation cannot.

Judges cannot be sued for their decisions. They cannot be meaningfully challenged without contempt proceedings. A judge who delivers a child to an abuser faces no consequence. This is the architecture. Work within it, not against it. Appeal if the decision is wrong. But direct confrontation with the judge – showing anger, challenging their authority, expressing frustration – will cost you.

Research on judicial decision-making confirms what practitioners know: judges form preliminary views early and are resistant to contradictory evidence. The CAFCASS safeguarding letter, the C100 form and any C1A are the first documents a judge reads – making them critical anchoring documents. **Get your initial paperwork right.** First impressions are disproportionately influential.

**What you can do:** make the judge’s job easy. A clear chronology. Organised evidence. Specific, documented incidents rather than general complaints. The judge who is deciding eight cases this week will give more weight to the parent who presents them with clarity than to the parent who presents them with emotion, however justified that emotion is.

## 10. How This Differs for Men and Women

The extraction pattern does not discriminate by sex. The family courts do.

### **If you are a woman**

The system is more likely to recognise overt abuse – physical violence, open aggression, threatening behaviour. If the pattern you are facing is overt, the coercive control framework may work in your favour, slowly and imperfectly. If the pattern is covert – financial control, subtle psychological manipulation, the quiet erosion of your reality – you face the same credibility gap everyone faces. The gendered framework helps you more than it helps men, but it helps you less than it should.

The specific risk for women: the alienation accusation. If you have been protective – if you have tried to limit the children’s exposure to someone who frightens them – the court may interpret your protection as alienation. The more you try to protect, the more the court sees obstruction. This is Gardner’s framework operating without his name.

## **If you are a man**

The system is structurally unable to process the covertly controlling mother. The gendered framework sees men as perpetrators and women as victims. When the reality is reversed, the framework has no category for your experience. You will be seen as the controlling one. Your attempts to document the pattern will be interpreted as obsessive behaviour. Your distress will be read as aggression.

Serious Case Review data from 2009 to 2015 shows mothers as the lone perpetrator in 36 per cent of child homicides. The gender war that frames this exclusively as male violence serves extractors of both sexes by preventing the coalition that could contain the pattern regardless of who carries it.

The specific risk for men: your evidence will need to be stronger because the system's default assumption works against you. Document meticulously. Present calmly. Let the evidence do the work. Do not express anger – it confirms the narrative.

## **For both**

Whatever your sex, you are at a disadvantage. The system was not built for what you are experiencing. Women face a system that may eventually recognise overt abuse but struggles with covert control and punishes protective instincts as alienation. Men face a system structurally unable to see the covertly controlling mother and predisposed to read male distress as aggression. Both face a system that rewards performance over truth, that mistakes composure for credibility, and that has no training in the patterns walking through its courtrooms every day.

The extraction pattern is the same regardless of sex. The presentation differs, the court's response differs, but the cycle of assessment, investment, extraction, maintenance and discard is identical. The tools in this guide – documentation, evidence, composure, coalition and above all the discipline of describing behaviour rather than applying labels – apply regardless of your sex or the sex of the extractor.

## 11. The Extractor's Vulnerabilities

The extraction pattern has weaknesses. They are not obvious – the pattern is designed to conceal them – but they exist and the court process can expose them.

**Inconsistency over time.** The extractor's narrative shifts. What they told the mediator differs from what they tell CAFCASS, which differs from what they say in court. Your chronological documentation catches this. A timeline that shows their version changing is powerful evidence.

**The charm drops.** Under sustained, calm, factual cross-examination, the mask sometimes slips. The narcissistic injury of being challenged – publicly, by someone who cannot be charmed – can produce flashes of the real pattern. Brief your barrister to watch for this. Specific, factual questions that they cannot answer without contradicting their own evidence.

**Other witnesses.** The pattern repeats. Former partners, former colleagues, family members who have experienced the same cycle. Their evidence corroborates yours. The pattern that triangulated you away from them is the same pattern a court can now see from multiple angles.

**Professional records.** School reports that show the children's behaviour changing. Medical records that document your stress-related symptoms. Police records. Social services records. The pattern leaves traces even when it leaves no bruises.

**Their own documentation.** Text messages, emails and social media posts that contradict their court presentation. The extractor often cannot resist performing on social media – the grandiose post that contradicts the humble courtroom manner. Screenshot everything.

## 12. The Mistakes Most People Make in Family Court

**Starting documentation too late.** Begin the day you recognise the pattern. A diary started before proceedings is evidence. A diary started after looks like litigation strategy.

**Representing yourself.** Litigants in person lose more often, take longer, and exhaust themselves against a represented extractor. If you cannot afford a solicitor for the whole process, get one for the key hearings. Explore legal aid – the means test has thresholds that may surprise you. Contact Advocate (formerly Bar Pro Bono Unit, [weareadvocate.org.uk](http://weareadvocate.org.uk)) or your local law centre.

**Engaging emotionally in the courtroom.** Crying, expressing anger, reacting to their performance. Your feelings are valid. The courtroom punishes them. Save your grief for your therapist. Present the court with evidence.

**Agreeing to therapists they choose.** Never. Insist on independent appointment.

**Accepting mediation when abuse exemption applies.** You may be exempt. Check.

**Disparaging them to the children.** The court watches for this. The extractor may disparage you freely. You cannot. The double standard is real. Maintain your dignity.

**Putting allegations in without evidence.** An unsupported allegation damages your credibility. Only assert what you can document. The pattern journal, the emails, the screenshots – these are what make allegations stick.

**Expecting the system to rescue you.** It may not. Build your case as though every institution will fail you. If they don't, you are pleasantly surprised. If they do, you are prepared.

### 13. If You Are Accused of Alienation

If you have been protective – if you have tried to limit your children's exposure to someone who frightens them – the other side may accuse you of parental alienation. This is the most common counter-move against protective parents. You need to know the current law.

The **Family Justice Council guidance (December 2024)** is definitive. CAF/CASS does not use the term “parental alienation” as a condition or syndrome – they assess for “alienating behaviours.” Three elements must ALL be established: the child shows reluctance, resistance or refusal; the reluctance is NOT caused by the accusing parent's own actions; AND the other parent engaged in behaviours directly causing the reluctance.

Critically: **“Parental alienation will not be appropriate in cases where there are findings of domestic abuse”** that caused protective behaviours or justified rejection. The FJC explicitly acknowledges DARVO – that abusive people will attempt to deflect blame by making counter-claims that the victim is alienating the child. If you have documented abuse, the alienation accusation is weaker. Your evidence base is your defence.

### 14. When the Litigation Is the Abuse

If the extractor is using repeated court applications as a weapon – filing, withdrawing, filing again, keeping you trapped in the legal process – there is a remedy.

**Section 91(14) orders** under the Children Act 1989, strengthened by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, allow the court to prevent a party from making further applications without leave. The new provisions explicitly recognise that applications themselves can constitute ongoing domestic abuse. A High Court judge described these provisions as “transformative.” Ask your solicitor about applying for a section 91(14) order if the pattern of repeated applications is documented.

### 15. When the Money Runs Out

Most people cannot sustain litigation against an extractor. The extractor knows this. Here are the realistic options.

**Legal aid:** available for domestic abuse cases. No time limit on evidence of abuse since 2018. 81% of applications through the domestic abuse gateway are granted. Find solicitors at [find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk](https://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk).

**Advocate** (formerly Bar Pro Bono Unit, [weareadvocate.org.uk](http://weareadvocate.org.uk)) provides free barristers – family law is nearly 30% of their caseload. **Direct access barristers** for specific hearings cut solicitor costs. **Unbundled services** – instruct a solicitor for limited tasks while self-representing for others. **Help with Fees** scheme reduces or waives court fees on low income. **Support Through Court** ([supportthroughcourt.org](http://supportthroughcourt.org)) provides free practical support.

The NCDV (0800 970 2070) provides free emergency non-molestation orders regardless of financial circumstances and will supply a McKenzie Friend for representation at no cost.

## 16. Your Checklist

### **Immediately:**

Start the diary. Today. Email yourself daily entries to create timestamps. Use the pattern journal format: date, time, incident, exact words, witnesses, physical response, impact on children.

Secure your documents. Passport, birth certificates, financial records, medical records. Copies in a location they cannot access.

Get independent legal advice. Before you announce, before you file, before you do anything that tips them off. Understand your position.

### **Before the first hearing:**

Build your evidence bundle. Chronological. Indexed. Cross-referenced. Make it easy for the judge and the CAFCASS officer.

Brief your solicitor and barrister on the pattern. Don't use clinical labels – describe the behaviour. "They present well publicly but behave differently in private. Here is the evidence." Get

your own therapist. You will need support throughout the process.

### **Throughout proceedings:**

Continue documenting. Every hearing, every exchange, every incident. The diary does not stop because proceedings have started.

Communicate in writing. Move everything off the phone and into email or a co-parenting app. Writing creates records.

Maintain your composure. In court, in front of CAFCASS, in every interaction that may be reported. Your dignity is your evidence.

Build your coalition. The people who validate your reality. Not a crowd – three people who see clearly.

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## Where to Go Next

**If you are in immediate danger:** call 999 or the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (24 hours, free).

**Legal support:** Rights of Women (family law helpline). Bar Pro Bono Unit. Citizens Advice. Your local law centre. Resolution (for finding specialist family solicitors).

**Other guides in this series:** The Good Faith Problem · Recognising Covert Narcissism · Waking Up · What Is Happening to You · Personal Protection Toolkit. All free at [www.trueregard.com](http://www.trueregard.com).

**The full framework:** *The Extraction Pattern* and *The Capture: How They Stole America* by Vaughan Smith. [www.trueregard.com/the-books](http://www.trueregard.com/the-books).

**Share this.** Someone in the family courts right now needs this guide. The pattern survives through isolation. Every copy shared rebuilds the grandmother.

# THE EXTRACTION PATTERN

Vaughan Smith

*The five per cent who design extraction. The ninety-five per cent who live inside it. The architecture that could contain it.*

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# THE CAPTURE

Vaughan Smith

*How They Stole America. The extraction pattern captured democracy, economy, healthcare, media and accountability – domain by domain.*

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