

# Study to investigate parent-child relationships and their possible consequences on, among other things, the life satisfaction and health of those affected. Alienated fathers

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Jorge Guerra González (Coord)  
October 2024

[Study on Parent-Child Relationships and Their Potential Effects on among others Life Satisfaction and Health of the persons concerned. Alienated Fathers]

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Study to analyse parent-child relationships and their possible consequences on, among other things, the life satisfaction and health of those affected.

Alienated fathers

Dr Jorge Guerra González (Coordinator)

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#### Summary:

There has been little research into parent-child estrangement in Germany to date, but a study from 2023 analyses the effects on children from separated families and highlights long-term consequences in adulthood. One aim of the study is to develop approaches to prevent and combat alienation. One part of the study focuses on fathers who have experienced alienation from their children and analyses their life satisfaction and mental health using questionnaires and interviews. It was hypothesised that these fathers would perform worse in these areas than fathers from intact or separated families, which was partially confirmed - with ambiguous results for physical health. The transcribed and anonymised interviews provide insights into the alienation processes, explain their causes and shed light on the emotional challenges faced by the fathers concerned.

**Keywords:** [child well-being, parent-child alienation, life satisfaction, mental health separation families, alienated fathers]

#### Summary:

[Parent-child alienation has been little researched in Germany so far, but a 2023 study analyses its impact on children from separated families and highlights long-term consequences in adulthood. One goal of the study is to develop approaches for preventing and addressing alienation. A section of the study focuses on fathers who have experienced alienation from their children, examining their life satisfaction, as well as mental health, using questionnaires and interviews. The hypothesis was that these fathers perform worse in the mentioned areas compared to fathers from intact or separated families, which was partially confirmed, with inconclusive results in the area of physical health. The transcribed and anonymised interviews provide insights into the processes of alienation, offer explanations for its causes, and shed light on the emotional challenges faced by affected fathers].

**Key Words:** [Best interest of the child, parental alienation, life satisfaction, mental health, separated families, alienated fathers]

#### VidPR:

HUB e.V. (IRCPI) Salzstr. 1, 21335 Lüneburg

#### Co-authors:

Hannah Andresen, Sude Chalvouzian, Victoria Krause, Antonia Willner

#### Editing and layout:

Dr Jorge Guerra González, Mia Meerbach, Jasmin Zorn

#### Correspondence:

Jorge Guerra González, Salzstr. 1, 21335 Lüneburg, [kontakt@jorgeguerra.de](mailto:kontakt@jorgeguerra.de)

## **I. Abstract**

In Germany, parent-child estrangement has hardly been researched to date. However, a study was published in 2023 that focused on children from separated and estranged families and analysed the effects and consequences for them (Guerra 2023a). The aim of this study was to raise awareness of parent-child alienation and to visualise the long-term consequences for affected children in adulthood. In addition, approaches to combat parent-child alienation are to be developed, for example to generate preventive measures to avoid alienation at an early stage.

This section is one of six parts of the overall study. In this section, the focus was on fathers who have experienced alienation from their children. This sub-study examines the life satisfaction as well as the physical and mental health of fathers using three questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. It is hypothesised that these fathers perform worse in the three areas mentioned (life satisfaction, mental and physical health) than fathers from reference groups (intact families or separating families).

The results partially confirm this hypothesis. Only in the area of physical health are the results ambiguous, which is analysed in more detail in the cross-group report.

The appendix contains the transcribed and anonymised interviews of the test subjects, which provide information about the process of alienation, attempts to explain its causes and offer deep, emotional insights into the lives of the alienated fathers.

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### III. List of abbreviations

<b>GERMA N CIVIL CODE</b>	Civil Code, 18 August 1896
<b>BGH</b>	Federal Court of Justice
<b>ECTHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>ECHR</b>	European Convention on Human Rights
<b>BVerfG</b>	Federal Constitutional Court
<b>EKE</b>	Parent-child alienation
<b>FamFG</b>	Act on Proceedings in Family Matters and in Matters of Non-Contentious Jurisdiction of 17 December 2008
<b>GG</b>	Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, 3 May 1949
<b>KWG</b>	Child endangerment
<b>LZ</b>	Life satisfaction
<b>PA(S)</b>	Parental Alienation (Syndrome)
<b>PhysG</b>	Physical health
<b>PsychG</b>	Mental health
<b>SÖS</b>	Socio-economic status
<b>StGB</b>	Penal Code, 15 May 1871

## **IV. Introduction**

### **A. Background to the research question**

Parents experience separations every day, which leads to a multitude of family conflicts. Nevertheless, little research is done in society on the effects of intact or intact families. There is also a lack of public communication about various areas of life in which the lives of those affected are influenced and shaped. This also applies to their experiences with youth welfare offices or other advice centres as well as with organisations when it comes to support and help. There are very few studies that look at the challenges faced by divorced or separated parents and how these shape their lives in many ways or affect their quality of life.

The background to this project lies in the intensive investigation of various family constellations and situations with regard to individual (parental) and social dynamics. A study by Dr Jorge Guerra González was published last year (2023a), which sheds light on the causes and consequences of experiences of separation and alienation in childhood and their effects in adulthood. It is the first study in Germany to deal with these issues, at least in this form and dimension. This gave rise to the idea of also looking at the parents' side: in other words, researching how different family situations and conflicts affect parents themselves and their lives in different ways.

The study aims to explore the effects of separation or estrangement from the parents' perspective. During this work, parents from intact and separated families as well as estranged parents were interviewed. The focus of the present group was on estranged fathers. ECD, also known internationally as *parental alienation*, describes a process in which a parent is deliberately separated from one or more children. In these situations, an emotional distance usually develops between the child and the estranged parent, whereby various factors can influence this process. To summarise, it is a process of separation of the child or children from a parent. As mentioned, the causes of alienation can be triggered by various factors, including separation, divorce, loss of contact, cheating, violence or other family conflicts.

As part of this group project, 25 estranged fathers were contacted. 12 of them took part. Explicit questions were asked in a semi-structured interview in order to gain an impression of the failed relationship with the family and, among other things, to find out how the subjects were currently coping with the situation as an estranged father. At the same time, separate questionnaires were sent out in advance, which the test subjects completed and returned before the interview. The overall results of the study were analysed with the help of the group results in order to gain an overall impression of the different life stories and impressions. Subsequently, the aim was to identify the similarities and differences between the subjects in order to be able to make general statements about the interviewees and compare these with the other group results in the seminar.

### **B. Current discussion**

As mentioned in the paragraph above, parents divorce, become estranged from the

child or encounter other similar problems, but there are hardly any studies on their effects. Even less about how affected parents feel: For example, how these problems shape their mental but also physical health or what their experiences with lawyers, youth welfare offices and counselling centres are like.

This study on estranged parents can help to raise awareness of this important issue. Many people, especially those who are not affected, are not aware of the emotional consequences of parent-child alienation (PCE). It is also very important that non-affected people from intact family backgrounds are sensitised to this issue, as affected parents do not go through an easy time. The effects of alienation on the parents can be very diverse. Ideally, targeted interventions could be developed to provide more helpful support to affected parents. Dealing with youth welfare offices and lawyers in particular is crucial in order to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that different family structures face in the future. It is essential to understand the needs and challenges: Families, especially in non-intact structures, can have specific needs and challenges. A research study can help to identify these needs and analyse the dynamics that influence how different life situations are dealt with, including in terms of interactions with youth services of support services. By understanding the individual experiences and challenges of families in different situations, youth services, lawyers and counselling services can optimise their programmes and services, which enables the development of targeted support strategies. The experiences and feedback from the test subjects can help various institutions to better reflect on and perceive their work and to develop and discuss potential new solutions.

Furthermore, it is important that those affected speak with their own voice. As we learnt from the interviews, estranged fathers want to be heard by outsiders, to be able to share their impressions and feelings with others. Listening and, above all, understanding from outsiders makes them feel recognised and less isolated in their difficult life situation.

In addition, qualitative surveys can be used to better identify their needs in order to create better awareness in the future. This can lead to the development of new support options. A topic that has hardly found a place in society. In their perception, the mother is in the foreground or at the centre of society even after a separation or divorce. Perhaps fathers are thought to be carefree after the separation and continue their lives without any problems.

It is essential to promote understanding and empathy in order to create a supportive environment for everyone involved. Furthermore, the study conducted can inspire professionals, politicians and parents to develop prevention strategies aimed at reducing the development of ECD or preventing alienating dynamics from arising in the first place.

### **C. Overview of the process**

This report begins by analysing the current state of the literature on ECD. Definitions and causes of this problem are explained and the effects on affected fathers and previous research results are presented.



The entire research project is then presented, including the research question, objectives, approach and data collection from this partial contribution to the overall study. The results of the questionnaires and interviews are presented and the most striking findings are summarised.

A discussion of the results and their implications is then held, and the relevance for practice is highlighted. In addition, approaches to solutions and preventive measures for conflict formation are presented and an outlook for future research is proposed.

## **D. Current state of the literature**

It can be stated that there is a lack of specific studies to date that specifically address the effects of parental conflict on the parents themselves in any way in this context. The lack is particularly noticeable in connection with ECEC. There appears to be a gap in research, especially when focussing on estranged fathers. It is striking that previous research has mainly focussed on the emotional and psychological stress of children in general or on single mothers, among others. In contrast, there has been little or no focus on the experiences and ways in which parents themselves deal with conflicts, alienation or experiences.

This finding clearly shows that parental conflicts, and especially the paternal view, are far too much in the background. But it also shows that far too little is said about the negative effects of failed family constructs, which emphasises the need for such research. These issues can also be confronted by non-affected people at any time or could arise in their close environment. This is the reason why future research efforts should also focus their attention on the conflict experiences and contact situations with the children of affected parents, so that this important topic gains more social relevance.

In view of this research gap, the present study offers an opportunity to gain new insights and contribute to a deeper understanding of the situation of parents, especially estranged fathers, and to address previously unexplored aspects of this topic.

The test subjects' experiences with various professionals and counselling centres are also particularly relevant, as they can be used to develop new concepts for preventing ECD. The study on the negative effects of family constructs can not only contribute to closing this research gap, but also encourage consideration of new practical support measures and interventions. In this way, preventative measures can be considered to help as many parents as possible to prevent conflict and alienation. In addition, studies are essential as they give those affected an opportunity to share their experiences, as many of those affected want their own concerns and thoughts to be given attention.

## **E. Parent-child alienation or PA - Parental Alienation**

### **1.**

Das Parental Alienation (PA) is the most common term used internationally to describe the parent-child alienation that occasionally occurs in highly contentious separation or divorce situations. PA gained attention in the 1980s, particularly from child psychiatrist Dr Richard A. Gardner. It refers to the process by which one parent

consciously or unconsciously influences the child to reject the other parent - even if they previously had a close relationship with them and there was no objective reason to do so. Gardner assumed that PA would lead to negative symptoms on the children, which would result in a diagnostic syndrome:

**PAS** or Parental Alienation Syndrome.

PA can range from mild dislike or avoidance to intense hatred or even fear of the other parent. For example, the affected children may tend to make false accusations against the other parent or refuse to visit or have any contact with him/her.

The effects of PAS on the children concerned are unknown, even if it can be assumed from a developmental psychology perspective that they should be negative. It can therefore be assumed that there are serious consequences, or long-term detrimental effects on their mental health. The effects can have an impact on many aspects of adult life, e.g. relationship skills. It can also put a strain on the child's relationship with the non-manipulative parent and worsen the overall family climate (Gardner, 2001). Nevertheless, the existence of PAS has not been definitively established. To this extent, PAS is still not recognised as a separate mental disorder in the WHO's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11 For Mortality And Morbidity Statistics, n.d.). This means that a PAS diagnosis is not possible. However, the World Health Organization (WHO), which is responsible for determining the ICD, is of the opinion that such behaviours are relevant to health or that they should be included, albeit under a different heading .<sup>1</sup>

Identifying and managing PAS requires careful examination of the family dynamics and appropriate legal and psychological support for all parties involved. Interventions may include the involvement of family therapists, mediators, child welfare services and educational counselling services where communication needs to be improved. Without forgetting to prioritise the interests of the child.

Overall, ECD or PA is a complex phenomenon that is likely to have a serious impact

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/frequently-asked-questions/parental-alienation>: The purpose of ICD-11 is to provide an internationally standardised classification for health diagnoses, to count health events and episodes of contact with healthcare for statistical purposes. Chapter 24 'Factors influencing health status or contact with health services' allows for the recording of circumstances or problems which influence an individual person's health status, but which are not in themselves an illness or injury. This chapter includes the category 'caregiver-child relationship problem'. During the development of ICD-11, a decision was made not to include the concept and terminology of 'parental alienation' in the classification, because it is not a health care term. The term is rather used in legal contexts, generally in the context of custody disputes in divorce or other partnership dissolution.

The broader category of 'caregiver-child relationship problem' was seen as adequately covering aspects of this phenomenon that could be the focus of health services.

More recently, proposals to include the terms 'parental alienation' and 'parental estrangement' as index terms for 'caregiver-child relationship problem' were submitted and initially approved. Following online commentary, the WHO-FIC Medical and Scientific Advisory Committee recommended clarification that inclusion of a term for search purposes does not signify endorsement by WHO of the term or its use. Following that clarification, comments and questions have persisted about the misuse of the term to undermine the credibility of one parent alleging abuse as a reason for contact refusal and even to criminalize their behaviour.

#### **Review**

Considering the above, WHO has thoroughly reviewed all materials provided and considers that:

- Parental alienation is an issue relevant to specific judicial contexts.
- Inclusion of the term in the ICD-11 will not contribute to health statistics.
- There are no evidence-based health care interventions specifically for parental alienation.

In situations in which an individual labelled with this term presents for health care, other ICD-11 content is sufficient to guide coding. Users may classify cases to 'caregiver-child relationship problem'

Therefore, the index term 'parental alienation' has been removed, as has the parallel index term 'parental estrangement'.

on family relationships and therefore requires a precautionary, comprehensive and differentiated approach to manage it. The physical and psychological impact of the syndrome is far-reaching and significantly affects the lives of children and parents. The alienation of parents from their children leads to significant emotional distress and can have long-term effects on the affected families (Noga, 2022). Despite the controversies and the lack of official recognition, PA remains a frequently discussed topic rather on a political level, which makes the implementation of such measures much more difficult. Unfortunately, the number of victims grows as long as confusion or inactivity prevails.

## **V. Presentation of the project**

### **2.**

#### **A. Research question, hypotheses and objectives**

##### **1.**

##### **1. Research question and hypotheses**

This study aims to provide an answer as to whether the different family models (intact, separated, estranged) have an impact on the life satisfaction (LZ), mental health (PsychG) and physical health (PhysG) of the respective fathers and mothers.

It is assumed that the LZ, PsychG and PhysG of estranged parents are worse than those of separated parents or intact families. The null hypothesis would therefore be that there is no recognisable difference between the three conditions. It is also assumed that there are hardly any differences between the parents within the same condition according to gender.

In order to prove this, subjects were divided into 6 groups according to condition and gender. The main focus of this report is the estranged fathers.

##### **2. Objective**

##### **1.**

The study pursues various objectives. To focus attention on the visibility of ECD and its consequences - especially if hypotheses are confirmed. To gain insights into the causes of the results. To stimulate a debate on ECD and its prevention, action and reaction.

#### **B. Procedure and data collection**

##### **2.**

Acquisition took place via various channels, in particular social networks, appeals in the press and at Leuphana University. In addition, some test subjects were also generated from the students' circle of acquaintances.

The interested test subjects were contacted for the purpose of coordinating appointments. The interviews were then conducted and further information was obtained via questionnaires (appendix). It should be emphasised that the topic under investigation is a very sensitive and emotional one, which led to stressful situations for the researchers.

The test subjects received a total of 3 questionnaires in advance, which they

completed themselves. For statistical analysis, the answers were presented in a Likert scale. The first questionnaire was on the LZ, the second on psychosomatic stress and the third as a self-report on functional impairment. This was followed by coordination of the 3 interviewers in order to compare the results.

Each interview was semi-structured, the same for all subjects and researchers. It consisted of closed (Likert scale from 1-7) and open questions. It was then possible to expand on certain situations or topics or to individualise the answers<sup>2</sup>. There were also some simple questions, in particular to record gender, where participants could only give one answer from the options<sup>3</sup>. The interviews were then transcribed and coded for qualitative analysis.

Only 12 interviews were possible from the original list of 25 participants. The length of the interviews varied between 45 and 90 minutes. The procedure was discussed with the participants. All participants gave their consent to take part in the study in advance. Due to the fact that this is usually a very personal and emotional topic for the participants, their well-being was naturally the top priority and was constantly taken into account.

The interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word and analysed using MAXQDA software. The interviews were segmented according to certain predetermined codes. They were subdivided into several categories and were determined in advance by all groups for the purpose of comparability.

In addition, the answers to the questionnaires and the interview questions with the Likert scale were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for further statistical analyses using SPSS software.

The systematised results have been compiled in this report.

## **VI. Presentation of the results**

### **A. Results of the questionnaires**

#### **1. Questionnaire: Life satisfaction**

##### **1.**

Response scale: 1. strongly disagree; 2. disagree; 3. somewhat disagree; 4. partly/somewhat agree; 5. somewhat agree; 6. agree; 7 completely agree

Of the 13 participants, 92.3 % responded. 7.7 % abstained.

Question 1: In most areas, my life corresponds to my ideal expectations.

With an average value of 4.08, the statement is categorised by the participants as partly/partly. According to the participants' self-assessment, their life is partly in line with their ideals.

Question 2: My living conditions are excellent.

The average value is 3.25 and can be assigned to the statement "does not really apply".

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. <https://wpgs.de/fachtexte/frageboegen/fragen-in-frageboegen-arten/>.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. <https://www.bpb.de/lernen/angebote/grafstat/grafstat-software/51677/frageotypen-und-antworten/>.

The living conditions of the test subjects are not excellent.

Question 3: I am satisfied with my life.

The average value for this statement is 3.5, the midpoint between the answers "Does not really apply" and "partly/partly". The respondents are rather not satisfied to partly satisfied with their lives.

Question 4: So far, I have achieved the main things I want for my life.

With an average of 4.25, the statement can be categorised as "partly/partly". In some cases, the respondents have achieved the main things they wanted.

Question 5: If I could live my life over again, I would hardly change anything.

The average value of the possible answers to this statement is 2.75 and is categorised as "strongly disagree" with a tendency towards "somewhat disagree".

The test subjects would (rather) not live their lives like this again, at least not in the same way. They would want to change a few things.

## **2. Questionnaire: Psychosomatic complaints**

### **2.**

The psychosomatic complaints are listed below in descending order with the average values in brackets. The response scale was categorised as follows: 1. never; 2. every few months; 3. every few weeks; 4. every few days; 5. almost daily

Of the 13 participants, 84.6 % responded. 15.4 % abstained.

Between every few weeks and every few days are the following psychosomatic complaints:

- Sleep disorders (difficulty falling asleep, difficulty sleeping through the night) (3.82)
- Tired and exhausted throughout the day (3,27)
- Concentration disorders (3.18)

The following psychosomatic complaints occur between every few months and every few weeks:

- Rapid fatigue (2.91)
- Body awareness during excitement (2.82)
- Nervousness (2.73)
- Back pain (2.73)
- Neck pain (2.64)
- Cramps all over the body (2.64)
- Shoulder pain (2.64)
- Heartburn (2.45)
- Dizziness (2.45)
- Sudden outbreaks of sweating (2.36)
- Sensitive stomach (2.36)
- Palpitations with little exertion (2.18)
- Feeling of fullness (2.27)
- Headache (2.09)

On average, the following symptoms occur between never and every few months:

- Pain in the region of the heart (1.82)
- Shortness of breath with little physical exertion (1.73)
- Nausea (1.64)

### **3. Questionnaire: Weiss functional impairment rating scale - self-report**

#### **3.**

Response scale: 0 Never or not at all; 1 Sometimes or somewhat; 2 Often or frequently; 3 Very often or very frequently; / not applicable

All test subjects completed the questionnaire. The number of answers is given in the order of the scale. One answer corresponds to 7.7% of the respondents.

The following statements were categorised on average (value in brackets) between response level 3 (very often or very frequently) and 2 (often or frequently) by the respondents:

- Mental or physical injury (life skills) (2,3)
- Problems with the family (2.2)

The following statements were given on average (value in brackets) by the respondents between response level 2 (often or frequently) and 1 (sometimes or somewhat):

- Problems balancing their own needs against those of the family (1.8)
- Causing disputes in the family (1.7)
- Problems losing control over the family (1.7)
- Problems with fulfilling household duties (1.7)
- Problems doing their own work efficiently (1.7)
- Frustration with oneself (self-concept) (1.7)
- Discouragement (self-concept) (1.7) Unhappiness with one's own life (self-concept) (1.7)
- Problems working to their potential (1.7)
- Problems participating in hobbies (1.7)
- Feeling bad about yourself (self-concept) (1.6)
- Sleep problems (1.6)
- Problems with the partner (1.5)
- Problems with the required fulfilment of duties (work) (1.5)
- Problems having fun with other people (1.5)
- Problems maintaining friendships (1.5)
- Difficulty having fun together as a family (1.4)
- Drinking alcohol (1.3)
- Difficulties in working together (1.3)
- Problems with keeping the job (1.3)
- Problems with the categorisation of money (1.3)
- Problems looking after the family (1,2)
- Problems making friends (1,2)
- Getting into trouble (1,2)
- Feeling of incompetence (self-concept) (1,2)
- Problems getting ready for bed (1,2)
- Problems with nutrition (1,2)
- Keeping busy with other things while driving (1,2)
- Problems in the fulfilment of their tasks (university) (1,2)
- Problems with lecturers (university) (1,2)

- Problems taking notes (university) (1,2)
- Problems with very different grades (university) (1.2)
- Problems with their supervisor (1.1)
- Getting angry while driving (1.1)
- Difficulty getting along with other people (1.1)
- Problems with sexuality (1.1)
- Verbal aggressiveness (1.1)
- Smoke cigarettes (1)
- Avoidance of physical exercises (1)
- Dismissal/loss of job (1)
- Problems with working in a team (1)
- Problems with punctuality (work) (1)
- Problems with taking on new tasks (work) (1)
- Problems getting work done efficiently (university) (1)
- Problems with attendance (university) (1)
- Problems working to their potential (university) (1)

The following statements were categorised by the participants on average (value in brackets) between response level 1 (sometimes or somewhat) and 0 (never or not at all):

- Poor job evaluation (0.9)
- Relying on others to get things done for them (0.9)
- Aggressive driving (0.9)
- Problems keeping regular appointments with the doctor/dentist (0.9)
- Excessive or unpleasant use of the internet, video games or television (0.9)
- Problems with punctuality (university) (0.8)
- Unprotected sex (contraceptives, condoms) (0.8)
- Inappropriate comments (social) (0.8)
- Problems getting ready before leaving the flat (0.8)
- Problems meeting minimum attendance requirements (university) (0.8)
- Problems maintaining an acceptable appearance (0.6)
- Problems with (high) school administration (0.6)
- Police contacts (0.6)
- Complaints from neighbours (0.6)
- Damage to or destruction of property (0.5)
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour (0.5)
- Illegal activities (0.5)
- Physical aggression (0.5)
- Smoking marijuana (0.4)
- Problems with their presence (work) (0.4)
- Taking illegal drugs (0.3)

## **B. Results of the interviews**

12 interviews were conducted and analysed. The following charts show mean values, striking results and consistent answers.

### 1) How old are you?

The test subjects were between 37 and 54 years old. The average age of this group was 47.

2) Which gender do you feel you belong to?

Only estranged fathers were interviewed. All respondents stated that they felt they belonged to the male gender.

3) Did you grow up in Germany? Do you have a migrant background?

The participants all grew up in Germany. Four of the participants interviewed have a migrant background.

4) How would you describe the socio-economic status of your...

1 Very low status; 2 Below average status; 3 Slightly below average status; 4 Average status; 5 Slightly above average status; 6 Above average status; 7 Highest status

The average value for this answer is 5.2, which corresponds to a slightly above-average socio-economic status of the parental home. The lowest answer here was an average status, the highest answer was the highest status.

5) What is your own socio-economic status?

1 Very low status; 2 Below average status; 3 Slightly below average status; 4 Average status; 5 Slightly above average status; 6 Above average status; 7 Highest status

On average, the test subjects rated their own socio-economic status at 5.3, i.e. also just above the slightly above-average status.

6) What is your highest qualification to date?

0 No school leaving certificate; 1 Secondary school leaving certificate; 2 Secondary school leaving certificate; 3 A-levels; 4 Bachelor's degree/university of applied sciences; 5 Master's degree/diploma; 6 Doctorate

In general, the test subjects enjoyed a high level of education, with an average score of 4.3. Most of them had a university degree, and one of them also had a doctorate.

7) Do you have siblings/half-siblings? 0

none , 1 available

About half of the respondents have siblings.

8) Did your parents stay together until you reached the age of majority?

0 yes; 1 no; 2 other (e.g. separation for other reasons: death; separation afterwards)

In 8 of the test subjects, the parents remained together. Three respondents had a divorce and one parent had died. This means that over 66% of the respondents had not experienced a separation in their own parental home.

9) Did your parents' parents stay together?

0 yes; 1 no; 2 other (e.g. separation for other reasons: death; separation afterwards)



Only 3 of the participants were able to state that their grandparents had stayed together. The other participants did not know this, as often one grandparent had already died, or no information was provided.

10) How is/was the relationship with your mother

1 Extremely poor; 2 Very poor; 3 Poor; 4 Average; 5 Good; 6 Very good; 7 Excellent

Only 1 respondent answered "average". 4 respondents answered "excellent". The average value of all answers given is 5.8, which corresponds to the answer "good" with a strong tendency towards "very good".

11) How is/was the relationship with your father

1 Extremely poor; 2 Very poor; 3 Poor; 4 Average; 5 Good; 6 Very good; 7 Excellent

The average score is 5.3, which corresponds to the answer "good". In comparison, the relationship with the mother is rated 0.5 points better. 1 respondent answered "extremely poor".

12) Due to your experiences at home, you feel emotionally...

1 Extremely poor; 2 Very poor; 3 Poor; 4 Average; 5 Good; 6 Very good; 7 Excellent

The average answer here was 4.5, i.e. between "average" and "good". The lowest answer here was "poor", the highest answer was "very good".

13) How do you feel about your mental health?

1 Extremely poor; 2 Very poor; 3 Poor; 4 Average; 5 Good; 6 Very good; 7 Excellent

The respondents answered with an average of 4.1, which corresponds to a rating of "medium". This answer was consistent with the information provided in the questionnaires. 1 respondent answered "extremely poor", while 1 responded "excellent".

14) How do you feel in terms of your physical health?

1 Extremely poor; 2 Very poor; 3 Poor; 4 Average; 5 Good; 6 Very good; 7 Excellent

On average, the test subjects feel good with a 4.9. The answers ranged from "very poor" to "excellent".

15) Are you/were you undergoing psychological/psychiatric treatment? 0 no, 1 yes

10 of the participants answered this question in the affirmative.

15a) If yes, why and for how long? What was the diagnosis?

0 none; 1 depression; 2 other affective disorders; 3 anxiety disorder; 4 Adjustment disorder; 5 ADHD; 6 PTSD; 7 other

The diagnoses depression and PTSD were each mentioned twice. The diagnosis of adjustment disorder was mentioned once. "Other" was mentioned 3 times.

16) Do you have severe physical complaints? 0 no; 1 yes

4 of the participants stated that they had physical complaints. The other participants denied this statement.

17) How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parental home?

1 Very low KS; 2 Below average KS; 3 Slightly below average KS; 4 Average KS; 5 Slightly above average KS; 6 Above average KS; 7 Highest KS

Half of the respondents would categorise the conflict situation in their own parental home as very low and below average. Only 1 of the test subjects indicated the highest level of conflict situation.

18) Have your parents involved you or the children in the parental conflict?

1 practically not/unconsciously; 2 very little; 3 little; 4 medium; 5 strongly; 6 very strongly; 7 extremely

The average value here is 2.6, i.e. roughly halfway between "very little" and "little". The lowest value of the statements made is 1 and the highest is 7.

19) How much conflict protection did you experience overall as a child?

1 Highest KoS; 2 Above-average KoS; 3 Slightly above-average KoS CoS; 4 Average CoS; 5 Slightly below average CoS; 6 Below average CoS; 7 Very low CoS

All answers were represented in this question. The average score here is 3.1 as "slightly above average" conflict protection.

20) How much attention did you receive as a child?

1 Very low value-added tax; 2 Below-average value-added tax; 3 Slightly below-average value-added tax; 4 Average value-added tax; 5 Slightly above-average value-added tax; 6 Above-average value-added tax; 7 Highest value-added tax

The answers to this question ranged from "above-average dedication" to "below-average dedication". The mean value of 3.1 is slightly above average attention.

21) How strong is your current bond with your carers?

1 Very low retention rate; 2 Below average retention rate; 3 Slightly below average

retention rate; 4 Average retention rate; 5 Slightly above average retention rate; 6 Above average retention rate; 7 Highest retention rate

The average of the answers here is 2.9, i.e. just below "slightly above average" loyalty. According to the respondents, contact was lost in some cases over the years.

22) How much contact do you currently have with your carers?

1 Very low income tax; 2 Below average income tax; 3 Slightly below average income tax; 4 Average income tax; 5 Slightly above average income tax; 6 Above average income tax; 7 Highest income tax

This answer builds on the previous question and, at 2.8, is also just below "slightly above average".

23) Have you had contact as a child with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts, etc.?

0 no, 1 yes

Only one of the respondents had contact with the institutions mentioned as a child. It is the same respondent who stated a poor relationship with his father and a high level of conflict in his own parental home in the previous questions.

24) Would you use the professionals again or recommend them to others?

The respondent who had contact with the family court and other institutions would also recommend it to others. He himself says that it did not necessarily lead to the desired success. However, it was helpful in that the children were encouraged by such institutions to express their opinions regardless of conflicts of loyalty.

25) How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own/your biological family?

1 Very low KS; 2 Below average KS; 3 Slightly below average KS; 4 Average KS; 5 Slightly above average KS; 6 Above average KS; 7 Highest KS

2 respondents rated their own conflict situation as slightly above average. 3 respondents state an above-average conflict situation, while more than half speak of the highest conflict level.

The average of the answers is 6.4 and therefore just in the middle between the two highest answers.

26) Have you or the other parent involved the children in the parental conflict?

1 practically not/unconsciously; 2 very little; 3 little; 4 medium; 5 strongly; 6 very strongly; 7 extremely

The average response here was 5.6, i.e. strong to very strong.

27) How much conflict protection have your children experienced overall?

1 Highest KoS; 2 Above-average KoS; 3 Slightly above-average KoS  
KoS; 4 Average KoS; 5 Slightly below average KoS; 6 Below average KoS; 7 Very low  
KoS

One respondent indicated the highest level of conflict protection, while the average of the remaining responses was 4.8, i.e. just below slightly below average conflict protection. The respondents all emphasised that they themselves had not neglected conflict protection, but that this had not been done by the ex-partner and family members.

28) How much attention did your children receive overall?

1 Very low value-added tax; 2 Below-average value-added tax; 3 Slightly below-average value-added tax; 4 Average value-added tax; 5 Slightly above-average value-added tax; 6 Above-average value-added tax; 7 Highest value-added tax

The average answer here is 1.7, i.e. between the highest allocation level and above-average allocation.

29) How strong is your children's current bond with their carers?

1 Very low retention rate; 2 Below average retention rate; 3 Slightly below average retention rate; 4 Average retention rate; 5 Slightly above average retention rate; 6 Above average retention rate; 7 Highest retention rate

Only 6 test subjects gave an answer here. The average answer here is 2.5, i.e. a slight to above-average level of attachment between the children and their caregiver.

30) How much contact do your children currently have with their carers?

1 Very low income tax; 2 Below average income tax; 3 Slightly below average income tax; 4 Average income tax; 5 Slightly above average income tax; 6 Above average income tax; 7 Highest income tax

Only 4 test subjects were able to give an answer here, as the other test subjects' contact with the children was too limited.  
The answers include an average, above-average and the highest level of contact with the reference person.

31) Do you have/have you had contact as a father/mother with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts, etc.?

0 no, 1 yes

All test subjects had contact with the above-mentioned institutions as a father.

32)Would you use the professionals (again if necessary) or recommend them to others?

The respondent who had contact with these institutions as a child himself, recommends this to others. All others would not recommend the contact to others or would make use of the counselling again.

34)Are you currently in a new committed relationship?

Half of the test subjects are in a new, stable relationship.

34 a) If yes: Would you describe this relationship as support/encouragement for you?

1 Very low lowest; 2 Below-average lowest; 3 Slightly below-average lowest; 4 Average lowest; 5 Slightly above-average lowest; 6 Above-average lowest; 7 Highest lowest

One of the test subjects living in a new relationship describes this relationship as below average support without understanding the situation. The other test subjects feel maximally supported.

35) How stressful is/was the separation for you?

1 Very low income tax; 2 Below average income tax; 3 Slightly below average income tax; 4 Average income tax; 5 Slightly above average income tax; 6 Above average income tax; 7 Highest income tax

Half of the test subjects indicated a low stress level. One of the test subjects indicated an above-average stress level, while the other test subjects abstained.

36)How stressful do you think the separation is/was for your children?

The average stress that the test subjects estimate for their children is 5.3, which is slightly above average.

37)In your opinion, what are the other parent's motives?

The respondents provided various details about this. The majority of fathers said they did not know the exact reasons. Some of them assume that their ex-partner or wife is not coping with the separation, while others say that the mothers in question are acting emotionally out of revenge for past incidents. One respondent states that they have done things in the past that justify the mother's behaviour.

38)How did this situation come about and what factors influenced it?

Some of the respondents did not provide any information on this. Others talk about relationship problems and arguments that led to alienation by the mother.

39)How old were the children? How long did the process take?

Different information was provided. The children were between one and 14 years old. The process took at least one and a half years on average.

40) What were the consequences? For you, for the children, for the alienating parent, for the family?

Some of the test subjects stated that the tense situation had normalised as a result of the long process and that it had become all the more difficult to find a way back to normal contact.

### **C. Conspicuous results**

Firstly, it can be seen that intact families on average have a higher degree of LC, as illustrated by their mean value of 5.5111 and the corresponding standard deviation of 1.43402. These results are as expected in that intact families generally provide stable social structures and create a supportive environment for their members.

In contrast, families in separation situations show a significantly lower mean value of the LC, as shown by their mean value of 4.2571 and the corresponding standard deviation of 1.17838. Separations often lead to emotional turmoil and uncertainty, which can have a direct impact on the well-being of those involved.

Particularly noteworthy are the results for estranged families, which have the lowest mean value of the LZ. With a value of 3.5280 and a standard deviation of 1.07839, these figures show that estrangement has a particularly severe impact on the general well-being of the parents concerned. One possible explanation could be the emotional stress and separation from their children, which would be particularly painful for estranged parents.

Interestingly, the data also show differences between estranged mothers and fathers, although the differences are small. Fathers have a mean score of 3.5400 with a standard deviation of 1.03730 and mothers have a mean score of 3.5200 with a standard deviation of 1.14093. Although both groups have similar mean scores on LC, the standard deviations are different. Estranged mothers appear to have greater variation in their LZ than estranged fathers, which may indicate that women may react differently to estrangement from their children than men.

It should be noted that research can provide important indications that the sample is not representative, that the results cannot in principle provide any clear conclusions for the general public.

The results show that intact families have a higher average PhysG score ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.656$ ), while separated families have a slightly lower score ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.363$ ). Surprisingly, the mean value for PhysG in estranged families ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.165$ ) lies between the values for intact and separated families. Since the results of the study on the effects of ECEC on children (Guerra 2023a) did not find this difference, the explanation may be methodological. A Likert scale was not uniformly offered when determining one's own PhysG. These results should therefore be treated with caution. This also applies to the PhysG values of estranged mothers and fathers. The data show that, on average, estranged fathers have a slightly higher score for physical symptoms ( $M = 4.91$ ,  $SD = 1.578$ ) than estranged mothers ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.745$ ). This could indicate that estranged fathers may be more affected by the effects of alienation than estranged mothers. At the very least, the burden seems to be comparable for both parents.

With regard to the PsychG, the following mean values and standard deviations were obtained: Intact families had a mean of 5.54 (SD = 1.647), separated families a mean of 4.60 (SD = 1.273) and estranged families a mean of 3.88 (SD = 1.430). These figures show a gradual decline in psychological well-being from intact, to separated and finally to estranged families. The values show that the family situation has a significant influence on PsychG. Estranged families in particular have an increased risk of psychological symptoms, which can be attributed to the emotional stress and conflicts in such situations. Interestingly, differences were found between estranged mothers and fathers. The mean score of psychological symptoms for estranged mothers was 3.80 (SD = 1.222), while for estranged fathers it was 4.00 (SD = 1.732). These results suggest that estranged mothers may tend to experience slightly higher distress than estranged fathers, although the difference does not appear to be very significant.

The question regarding physical impairments was almost always answered by the participants as slightly above average, which indicates a mild physical burden within this group. Similarly, the question about the presence of psychological complaints was answered by the respondents on average with "medium". It is also noteworthy that almost all but 2 of the respondents were or are undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment. This would indicate honest answers in the assessment of their own mental health.

It should be noted that half of the estranged fathers surveyed are currently in a new steady relationship.

On the other hand, the respondents' answers to the question of how much conflict protection they experienced as a child were very different.

The open questions were answered in different ways. For example, the question about the presumed motives of the ex-partner for alienating the joint children. One estranged father admitted that the behaviour of his ex-partner was his fault. Another respondent did not know the answer to the question and another responded that he thought his ex-partner had carried out the estrangement as revenge.

## **VII. Critical discussion of the results**

### **A. Discussion of the results of the questionnaires and interviews**

The results appear to be consistent, which would be an indication of an honest response to the questions. Qualitatively and quantitatively, there are no contradictions. The LZ, perceived stress, own assessment of the PsychG, perception of psychological treatments are in harmony with each other. This also applies to psychosomatic complaints (e.g. the answer to question 18 on sleep disorders (value of 3.8 out of 5)).

There does not appear to be a transgenerational effect, at least as far as parental separation is concerned: only two of the test subjects were separated from their parents until they reached the age of majority. In the other test subjects, the parents remained together until they reached the age of majority. Their own parental home does not reveal any correlations with alienation. The relationship with the parents was mostly good and the test subjects felt adequately prepared for life.

According to the evidence, there is no recognisable effect of alienation on socio-economic status (SES) (SES is at least average, and even slightly above average for 9 out of 11). This would rather be related to their own educational status. 10 out of 11 respondents have a high school diploma, and 7 out of 11 even have an academic degree.

## **B. Limitation**

It should be pointed out that the study only confronts us with one side of the reality of alienation. The sides - the respective mothers - or the children or the professionals involved are not illuminated. For this reason, some of the statements made in the study should be relativised - at least as far as an evaluation of the general family situation is concerned, but not the reality of alienation or the personal situation of the test subjects, which are central to the present study.

The study is not about searching for the truth of the alienation reality of the respective families or recording it, but about the LZ, the PsychG or the PhysG of the test subjects or within or outside the conditions (intact, separated, alienated). The search for truth or the holistic recording of the EKE phenomenon would certainly be an interesting approach and an important stimulus for further research, which would, however, require a different study design.

## **C. Discussion according to the quality criteria**

The quality criteria provide an insight into the quality and robustness of the study results<sup>4</sup>. The quality criteria are met if an acceptable level of objectivity, reliability and validity is given - as well as with the applicable ethical standards.

The fulfilment of the quality criteria is illustrated here using a subjective orientation scale ad hoc (0 indicates that the quality criterion is not fulfilled, 10 indicates that it is fully fulfilled). The number 5 represents the centre here and indicates that parts of the quality criterion are fulfilled.

### **1. Objectivity**

A test is objective if the results are independent of the person conducting the research.

In this case, the 12 test subjects were sent the questionnaire by email and were able to complete it without any influence from the interviewer. They were all given the same question and answer options.

However, it cannot be guaranteed that the test subjects responded completely independently of disruptive and other influencing factors (noise, media, mates, family, etc.). Certain indications in this respect have already been mentioned above, namely that the test subjects gave honest and focussed answers and that the influencing or disruptive factors did not distort the answers.

The interviews were conducted by three interviewers. All three were given the same instructions and the same interview guide. Objectivity could nevertheless have been impaired by the different approaches of the interviewers. However, this is not to be

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<sup>4</sup> <https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/guetekriterien-35152>.



assumed, as the respondents' answers were consistent and in line with the results of the questionnaires.

In this respect, there is good reason to assume that objectivity was maintained through the standardised procedure. A rating of 7-8 can be assumed.

## **2. Reliability**

Reliability indicates whether the results of a test are reliable. It can be assumed that the reliability of the results is given if a test, repeated under the same conditions, produces the same result. It is therefore about measurement accuracy. For this purpose, we also look at whether measurement errors have occurred and whether there are any noticeable deviations.

6 groups of researchers are assigned to the 6 groups of subjects in the total of 3 conditions of the study (x2 to address both genders), who received the same questionnaires and the same interview questions. Each group pursues the cross-group hypothesis as well as its own hypothesis.

The results obtained confirm the measurement accuracy of the instruments - which was officially established at least for the questionnaires (Guerra 2023a, 181 ff). In this respect, the reliability of a value of 8 can be assumed.

## **3. Validity**

Validity indicates whether a test measures what it is supposed to measure<sup>5</sup>. The determination is fulfilled by whether the test results correspond to a criterion that is taken outside the procedure (as well as the weather and the methods of weather forecasting)

It should be noted that questionnaires and interviews are based on the individual, mostly retrospective responses of the test subjects, which usually cannot be contrasted objectively. This is also logical, as it is often a question of their subjective state of health - such as LZ or health, which according to the common definition is increasingly based on the value of subjective stress, at least the PsychG.

The answers given by the test subjects in the various test procedures nevertheless correspond to objectifiable criteria - diagnosis or treatment.

In this sense, it can be assumed that what was to be measured in this research project was actually measured. In this respect, the quality criterion of validity is also fulfilled (value: 7).

This research should not and cannot answer whether and to what extent the results obtained should be attributed to the alienation phenomenon or to other variables. However, it could and should allow certain indications in this sense, which future in-depth research should take up.

## **4. Ethics**

This involves examining the extent to which a research project or procedure complies with the applicable ethical principles. In particular, reference should be made here to those principles that must be observed in research involving human subjects.<sup>6</sup>

In this sense, it should be noted that the physical integrity of the test subjects is at least not directly affected during the acquisition of knowledge, but their

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<sup>5</sup> <https://brockhaus.de/ecs/enzy/article/validit%C3%A4t?isSearchResult=true>.

<sup>6</sup> Research involving human subjects - principles and challenges for the work of ethics committees, Iris Pigeot, Ulrich Mansmann & Geraldine Rauch.

mental integrity may be. This is because it is to be expected, especially in the group, that the test subjects will have to report on very painful or even traumatic experiences, as the research aims to record precisely these experiences and their consequences.

It should be emphasised that participation was voluntary and that the test subjects were allowed to discontinue participation at any time without giving reasons - without suffering any disadvantages. Each participant agreed to this in writing. Voluntary participation and self-determination are therefore guaranteed.

In fact, some test subjects decided not to participate, which they had initially agreed to. Or they decided not to answer certain questions.

There is another aspect that is relevant to mention here. As was made clear above, participation in the study, especially in the "alienation" condition, can probably mean a certain emotional burden for the test subjects. However, this risk is acceptable for the protection of future subjects under the condition of voluntariness. It is then a risk-benefit ratio. The aim is to gain knowledge so that the phenomenon of alienation will occur less in the future, or that it can be better dealt with, or that it can be better prevented. This is the only way to gain these insights. This research is therefore still necessary and ethically acceptable. Finally, it should be mentioned that the young researchers are also exposed to this emotional burden. This was addressed several times in advance, even before participation in the research project was decided. The researchers also decided to take part voluntarily. Nevertheless, they were specially prepared for the critical content of the research and the interviews.

In this respect, the ethics criterion is fulfilled with 7-8.

It can therefore be assumed that all quality criteria are met.

## **VIII. Additional information**

### **3.**

#### **A. Preventive measures and solutions**

There is a need to find alternative ways to reunite families and strengthen the relationship between parents and their children. The interviews with the subjects made it possible to understand the seriousness and complexity of estrangement situations in more detail. The results of this study have emphasised the urgency of developing effective solutions in this regard.

Prevention refers to the use of measures aimed at reducing risks (generally understood as adverse events, dangers, problems, illnesses, etc.) in advance and at least minimising the likelihood of harm occurring. This can be achieved through various approaches, such as education, promotion of appropriate behaviour, early detection, timely interventions or the creation of a supportive environment.

Pursuing preventive operations makes sense for several reasons. Firstly, it can be more cost-effective to act in good time than to deal with the consequences of the occurrence of the adverse event afterwards.

This improves quality of life and promotes well-being by minimising risk factors and spreading sensible behaviours and strategies. In the long term, preventive measures

can also help to relieve the burden on economic systems (e.g. the healthcare system), freeing up resources for other tasks<sup>7</sup>. The available resources can then be utilised more efficiently and a fairer and more sustainable society can be built on them.<sup>8</sup> This study shows significant results regarding the negative effects of ECEC on the fathers concerned. Alienation can lead to serious psychological and psychosomatic stress for them, but also for other people<sup>9</sup>. It is therefore advisable to think about prevention in the sense described above. The following preventive measures can be recognised with regard to ECD:

- Mediation (see next heading)
- Therapeutic treatment
- Judicial measures
- Counselling centres
- Promoting communication
- Research

From the interviews conducted and in comparison with the other parent groups in the study, it is clear that emotions between the parents are often the trigger for escalation to the point of alienation. However, the question is how to ensure that emotions such as jealousy, revenge or anger between parents do not affect the parental bond with the children.

- Mediation can prevent the situation from escalating in the event of a separation. This option is considered in more detail below.
- Therapeutic treatment in dealing with one's own emotions is also a way of learning not to subject the child to co-dependency.
- Judicial measures: one option, for example, is to set supervised or accompanied contact times by the court, which may not be deviated from without good reason. Parent-teacher conferences could also be ordered. Ultimately, it is up to the court to uphold the limits of the law in the best interests of the child. However, it should be emphasised here that courts can work best when they are aware of all sides of the case. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the court only has a limited insight into the situation in the constellation and with the few resources (time, energy, etc.).
- Counselling centres offer the opportunity to have individual and joint discussions with parents in order to work out common points of discussion. The professionals at these centres, regardless of whether they are youth welfare offices or parenting advice centres, work with the child in mind. The parents are always asked about topics of discussion that concern the child, and then they start with topics that they agree on. This also involves mediating between parents whose communication is not conflict-free.
- Promoting communication is another point that can prevent parental conflict (and then ECEC). The agencies listed, but also the parents' social network, are called upon to support the parents in this regard. The aim is not to save a failing relationship or marriage, but to make the parents realise that communication that focuses on the child's well-being is and must be possible. It is basically about a consistent separation of the parent and couple levels. The first may/should perhaps no longer exist, but the second will continue to exist.

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<sup>7</sup> Schwarzer/Schwarzer 2017

<sup>8</sup> Stolz/Mayer 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Rief/Hiller 2009.

- **Research:** This allows the causes and risk factors for the development of ECEC to be specified. Through facts and figures, the early identification of risk factors to minimise the number of estranged children and thus minimise the impact on the parents concerned can be established. However, such research findings should also lead to the identification of resources in this regard.

The following inter-family measures for ECD prevention can also be recognised from the interviews conducted:

- Promoting a positive parent-child relationship can prevent conflicts of loyalty and counteract alienation, for example. A good relationship with the parents increases the chance that alienation will not occur and that the children will re-establish contact with their parents as they get older and want to know their version of the story.
- Legal support for affected families is important, as it is a fundamental right of every child to have contact with their parents. Therefore, all points of view can and should be understood. However, sanctions should be used if necessary.
- The fact that there is a need for action on the part of professionals is clearly shown by the fact that the test subjects did not find the family support system useful and would therefore not recommend it to others. Research into why this is the case, what else could be done and under what conditions therapies would be successful is still in its infancy.

## **B. Mediation as a preventive solution approach**

This section takes a closer look at the role of mediation as a solution for dealing with all kinds of conflict situations in the family context (including estrangement situations)

Mediation is an interactive and voluntary conflict resolution method that offers the opportunity to bring the conflicting parties together. It is a transparent process in which a mediator acts as an external, independent and neutral mediator. The mediators help with inter-party communication and the negotiation and agreement process, but have no decision-making authority. This method therefore emphasises the importance of personal responsibility and promotes the active participation of all parties involved (in this case, family members, especially the parents).

In the case of ECD, the parents are the ones who have a conflict with each other, so the involvement of the children would not initially be necessary. But it might be conceivable - for example with older or adult children who have distanced themselves from their parents because of the ECD.

Mediation centres on the needs and interests of the parties. The solution is worked out by the parties themselves and recorded in writing as a result. The principles and techniques of mediation should enable the mediator to guide the parties to the conflict towards this solution within a defined structure (Frank Hartung, n.d.).

It is important to draw attention to sanctioning legal aspects<sup>10</sup>. This is because where the limits of (mandatory) law have been exceeded - criminal law, endangering the welfare of the child, etc. - the scope for mediation is significantly reduced.

The mediator first explains the course of the mediation process and the role of the mediators. It is then clarified whether the conflict at hand is suitable for mediation. If this is the case, the mediation contract is concluded.

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<sup>10</sup> Guerra González 2023b

In the second step, the conflict topics are collected and the conflict situation is described by both parties. Agreements are emphasised and differences of opinion are worked out so that a sequence for dealing with the issues can then be determined.

The next step is to gather the essential and necessary information for dealing with the problem. The actual deepening of the conflict situation can then begin. It is important that the different points of view of the parties are presented at all times and that a mutual understanding of these is created or developed as far as possible. Only in this way is it possible to move from positions to needs, interests, feelings and emotions in mediation. To achieve this, it is equally important that the parties feel comfortable, safe and understood during the negotiation. This is the decisive phase that will determine the success of the mediation. This is where the conflict should be resolved and the emotional knot defused. Building on the needs and interests expressed, the basis for subsequent decision-making should be created.

In the next step, the concrete options for conflict resolution are proposed by the parties, worked out and further possible conflict settlements are examined, evaluated and discussed with regard to existing implementation options. The provisional partial solutions and compromises can then be compiled and the overall agreement drafted.

In the final step, the results are summarised and agreed. This is followed by the written fixation of the conflict resolution in a contract, which is then signed (Frank Hartung, n.d.)

Successful mediation is based on specific cornerstones. In the first case, it is very important that the mediator represents both parties equally (*impartiality*) and maintains a neutral stance. Furthermore, the participants must take part in the negotiation process *voluntarily* and, in this sense, *out of their own motivation*. This also requires a certain degree of *personal responsibility* on the part of the parties. *Confidentiality* and *openness* in the meetings are also necessary. Finally, the method is based on reaching the deep needs and emotions of the participants. For this, *empathy* is of enormous importance so that mutual understanding can be restored (Landers, 2022). Finally, *openness to results* should be mentioned. No result can or should be fixed before the mediation, otherwise it would simply fail - one side could feel at a disadvantage or advantage.

Compared to court proceedings, mediation offers numerous advantages. In particular, the *self-determination* of the parties and the possibility that the "*experts*" in their family decide, who are therefore involved and can develop their own creative solutions. The combination of such cornerstones and advantages is a guarantee of the *sustainability* of the results achieved. Not least because the conflict, whose core is emotional, is defused in the long term by the mediative method. In addition, mediation strives for future-orientated win-win solutions, which means that all parties involved achieve advantages and come out of the situation as winners - there are therefore no winner-loser constellations, as would often be the case in court.

This maintains, restores or even improves the personal relationships between the parties in the long term.

Despite its promising features, mediation is not without its challenges. Some points of criticism relate to its *effectiveness in highly conflictual situations* or the extent to which *voluntary* participation must be a prerequisite - the keyword being *compulsory mediation*.

In such constellations, it would certainly be difficult to create a constructive basis for dialogue or to find joint solutions that are acceptable to all parties involved. In

addition, external influences such as legal requirements could make people feel pressurised to take part in mediation. This can have a negative impact on their motivation or lead to internal blockages. Nevertheless, suitable measures can be taken to ensure that these challenges are successfully overcome.

For example, specially trained mediators can use techniques to create a supportive and empathetic atmosphere even in highly conflictual situations, allowing the parties to open up to communicate constructively with each other. Similarly, institutions and counselling centres can develop programmes to ensure that participation is voluntary and that mediation is based on a solid foundation of mutual respect and understanding. Such proactive approaches can further strengthen the potential benefits of mediation and maximise its effectiveness in different contexts.

In this group, 5 out of 12 participants stated that they had already taken part in mediation for general family problems. Several advantages and disadvantages of the method were expressed. The most frequently mentioned advantages include the fact that mediation enables a reunification of parent and child and could even prevent alienation at an early stage. The fact that mediation can be carried out more often was also noted as a positive aspect. This means that conflict resolution can be attempted again with the help of mediation even after a procedure has failed. In addition, the respondents felt it was positive that mediation can prevent or resolve the formation of what are often two hardened fronts, including between the parents.

On the other hand, the most frequent criticism was that mediation was no longer possible after a certain point. Mediation requires willingness, confidence and active co-operation. In complex family conflicts, it is often precisely at these points that mediation fails or the fronts are already too hardened for mediation to help. It was also noted that it is often difficult to organise custody conflicts fairly and that there is not always an optimal win-win solution for all parties (see interviews in the appendix).

It should also be mentioned that mediation is considered a service that should be privately financed (in principle, there is no comparable legal aid), which means de facto discrimination against financially weak people for economic reasons.

In this respect, it can be concluded that mediation can be seen as a useful approach to overcoming conflict situations between parents. Its relevance lies in the urgent need to find alternative ways to reunite families and strengthen the parent-child relationship. Mediation offers a transparent and voluntary conflict resolution process that aims to take into account the needs and interests of all parties involved and find common solutions. However, there are also challenges with mediation, such as its effectiveness in high-conflict situations, ensuring that participation is voluntary or covering the costs of less financially strong families. However, these can be easily overcome through proactive measures. The respondents' experiences highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of mediation, with the possibility of bringing parents and children together and the prevention or resolution of hardened fronts being emphasised as particularly positive. On the other hand, it was stated that finding a fair solution to highly escalated custody conflicts is often very difficult .

### **C. Outlook for future research areas**

Research is the key to targeted findings in areas about which there is, in principle, a lack of knowledge. Surprisingly, the research landscape and therefore its findings on family conflicts are extremely scarce. On the other hand, the family and its

prosperity are a guarantee for the prosperity of our future society.

Family relationships contribute significantly to the well-being of individuals and are essential for the development of young children and possibly also their parents. When these relationships are disrupted or become dysfunctional, this can have serious negative effects on the PhysG and PsychG of family members. By examining these effects, it is easier to understand how family constructs influence individual well-being and what measures can be taken to support and strengthen families (Baumrind 1991).

Families also play a central role in the socialisation of children and young people. Negative family constructs such as conflict, violence or alienation can affect children's development and have long-term consequences that extend into adulthood. By researching these constructs, it is possible to better understand how they affect children's development and what interventions are needed to promote their well-being and that of their parents.

Furthermore, family relationships have a significant impact on the social fabric and stability of society as a whole. Dysfunctional families can contribute to social problems such as crime, substance addiction or financial insecurity. Resources are wasted and potential is not realised. Targeted research should make it possible to develop measures to tackle these problems and strengthen society as a whole.

Finally, research into family constructs is important in order to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies. By understanding the underlying mechanisms, one can be able to develop targeted programmes and measures to support families in crisis situations and improve their functionality.

If research in the family context is scarce, research on ECD is almost completely absent. The role of the present study is therefore fundamental. In this respect, its results, as well as individual conversations with test subjects and acquaintances, give rise to the following future research projects:

*- Success factors in prevention*

In which cases of comparable family situations did alienation not occur? What is the reason for their realisation or prevention?

*- Challenges and barriers in the implementation of prevention*

measures In which situations was prevention not successful? What are the

respective

What are the main reasons or differences? If necessary, various measures to circumvent these barriers can be examined by means of field research.

*- Identification of risk factors*

It could be interesting to investigate the role of mental illness and family histories. Decisive character traits could be identified through further research so that early signs of these traits can be recognised, which would enable ECEC to have a preventative effect. If necessary, possible signs of alienation should be medically or professionally diagnosed in the same way as domestic violence, which could be

subject to mandatory reporting.

Finally, it is not known whether and then which *psychological and social factors* play a role in the development of alienation? Can possible motives such as revenge, anger or emotional distance be recognised in good time? If the parent is not understanding, what contact points should be considered? Who and how can support these children or this family? What role do transgenerational effects play here?

Once this research has been carried out, the next stage should be to evaluate strategies and to record certain consequences of prevention and intervention measures in long-term studies.

Some participants discussed the question of the conditions under which a *parenting licence* would be useful. This would be a research-based preparation of parents for parenthood, but also for their behaviour in the event of a separation or similar.

In any case, existing studies should ensure public *education and sensitisation*. Unlike other child protection issues, there is a lack of awareness of the injustice involved here. Society should be aware of the far-reaching consequences of these offences. But also the individual parents, before they want to alienate the other parent from their children's lives.

It is important to emphasise that no one discipline can primarily gain knowledge in this area. On the contrary, an interdisciplinary research approach should primarily be pursued. Psychological, social, sociological, legal, medical and pedagogical aspects, among others, should be taken into account. Innovative interdisciplinary approaches seem to have the edge. Creativity across disciplinary boundaries is essential at a time when interest in a topic with such far-reaching consequences is so limited.

## **IX. Conclusion**

This study on the LZ as well as the PhysG and PsychG of mothers and fathers in intact, separated and estranged families aims to provide an insight into the diverse effects of family structure on the individual. By integrating quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews, the study was able to offer a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and stresses that mothers and fathers are exposed to in different family contexts.

The results of the study regarding LZ and PsychG emphasise the urgency of developing effective support measures for estranged parents. It is not only the children who suffer enormously. The estranged parents also suffer. ECD thus takes on a social dimension - apart from the fact that other members can also suffer (siblings, grandparents, etc.).

Our society is not prepared for such burdens. Targeted therapeutic approaches, support services or intervention measures are not even rudimentary. They are needed for the complex challenges that these women and men are confronted with.

It is crucial that such interventions are not only aimed at the consequences, but also at strengthening the parent-child relationship and preventing the occurrence of the ECD phenomenon.

Raising awareness of the importance of, in this case, father-child relationships in



society and in therapeutic settings could help to improve support and recognition for estranged fathers. This could be achieved through training for therapists and professionals as well as information campaigns and public awareness initiatives. In addition, the implementation of support structures and programmes is crucial to facilitate access to appropriate help and support for estranged parents. This could include the establishment of specialised counselling centres, self-help groups or online resources that provide a safe space for those affected to share their feelings and experiences and receive peer support.

Overall, the present study provides important insights into the challenges and needs of estranged fathers and emphasises the need for further research and action to improve their DC and health, as well as relationship with their children. It is up to society to strengthen support and recognition for these fathers and provide them with the support they need to rebuild their relationship with their children and lead fulfilling lives.

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# XI. Attachments

## A. Questionnaires

### 1. Questionnaire I

Deutsche Version der Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)							
Es folgen fünf Aussagen, denen Sie zustimmen bzw. die Sie ablehnen können. Bitte benutzen Sie die folgende Skala von 1-7, um Ihre Zustimmung bzw. Ablehnung zu jeder Aussage zum Ausdruck zu bringen.							
	trifft überhaupt nicht zu	trifft nicht zu	trifft eher nicht zu	teils/ teils	trifft eher zu	trifft zu	trifft vollständig zu
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. In most areas, my life corresponds to my ideals.							
2. My living conditions are excellent.							
3. I am satisfied with my life.							
4. So far, I have achieved the main things I want for my life.							
5. If I could live my life over again, I would hardly change anything.							

\* Please enter in the e

### 2. Questionnaire II

Psychosomatische Beschwerden im nichtklinischen Kontext					
Nutzen Sie die nachfolgenden Antwortmöglichkeiten, um anzugeben, ob bzw. wie oft Sie die folgenden körperlichen Beschwerden bei sich wahrnehmen. Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten. Bitte lassen Sie keine Frage aus!					
	Nie	Alle paar Monate	Alle paar Wochen	Alle paar Tage	Fast täglich
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ermüden Sie schnell					
2. Haben Sie Kopfschmerzen					
3. Spüren Sie es am ganzen Körper, wenn Sie sich über etwas aufregen?					
4. Spüren Sie bei geringer Anstrengung Herzklopfen?					
5. Bekommen Sie bei geringer körperlicher Anstrengung Atemnot?					
6. Haben Sie einen empfindlichen Magen?					
7. Haben Sie ein Völlegefühl?					
8. Verspüren Sie Schwindelgefühle?					
9. Haben Sie Rückenschmerzen?					
10. Sind Sie nervös?					
11. Haben sie plötzliche Schweißausbrüche?					
12. Haben Sie Schmerzen in der Herzgegend?					
13. Haben Sie Nackenschmerzen?					
14. Haben Sie Schulterschmerzen?					
15. Spüren Sie, dass Ihr ganzer Körper verkrampft ist?					
16. Haben Sie Sodbrennen?					
17. Haben Sie Konzentrationsstörungen?					
18. Haben Sie Schlafstörungen (Einschlafschwierigkeiten, Durchschlafstörungen)?					
19. Ist Ihnen übel?					
20. Fühlen Sie sich den Tag über müde und zerschlagen?					

\* Bitte tragen Sie in der erwünschten Zelle die passende Zahl an - 0, 1, 2, 3, (keine).

### 3. Questionnaire III

WEISS-BEWERTUNGSSKALA ZUR FUNKTIONELLEN BEEINTRÄCHTIGUNG – SELBSTBERICHT (WFIRS-S)*					
	Niemals oder überhaupt 0	Manchmal oder etwas 1	Oft oder häufig 2	Sehr oft oder sehr häufig 3	Nicht zutreffend ( )
<b>A. Familie</b>					
1. Probleme mit der Familie					
2. Probleme mit der Partnerin / dem Partner					
3. Sich auf Andere verlassen, um Dinge für Sie zu erledigen					
4. Verursachung von Streitigkeiten in der Familie					
5. Schwierigkeit, sich in der Familie miteinander zu vergnügen					
6. Probleme, sich um die Familie zu kümmern					
7. Probleme, die eigenen Bedürfnisse gegen die in der Familie auszugleichen					
8. Probleme, die Kontrolle über die Familie zu verlieren					
<b>B. Arbeit</b>					
1. Probleme mit der geforderten Pflichterfüllung					
2. Probleme, die eigene Arbeit effizient zu machen					
3. Probleme mit Ihrem Vorgesetzten					
4. Probleme mit dem Erhalt des Arbeitsplatzes					
5. Kündigung/Verlust des Arbeitsplatzes					
6. Probleme mit der Arbeit im Team					
7. Probleme mit Ihrer Anwesenheit					
8. Probleme mit der Pünktlichkeit					
9. Probleme mit der Übernahme neuer Aufgaben					
10. Probleme, Ihrem Potential entsprechend zu arbeiten					
11. Schlechte Arbeitsbewertungen					
<b>C. Schule/Hochschule/Universität</b>					
1. Probleme beim Mitschreiben					
2. Probleme mit der Erfüllung von Aufgaben					
3. Probleme, die Arbeit effizient zu erledigen					
4. Probleme mit Lehrern/Dozenten					
5. Probleme mit der (Hoch)Schulverwaltung					
6. Probleme, die Mindestanforderungen an die Anwesenheit zu erfüllen					
7. Probleme mit der Anwesenheit					
8. Probleme mit der Pünktlichkeit					
9. Probleme, Ihrem Potential entsprechend zu arbeiten					
10. Problem mit sehr unterschiedlichen Noten					
<b>D. Lebensfertigkeiten</b>					
1. Exzessive oder unangemessene Nutzung von Internet, Videospielen oder Fernsehen					
2. Probleme, eine akzeptable Erscheinung zu erhalten					
3. Probleme, vor dem Verlassen der Wohnung fertig zu werden					
4. Probleme, für das Schlafengehen fertig zu werden					
5. Probleme mit der Ernährung					
6. Probleme mit der Sexualität					
7. Schlafprobleme					
8. Seelische oder körperliche Verletzung					
9. Vermeidung körperlicher Übungen					
10. Probleme mit der Einhaltung von regelmäßigen Terminen beim Arzt/Zahnarzt					
11. Probleme mit der Einhaltung von Pflichten im Haushalt					
12. Probleme mit der Einteilung des Geldes					
<b>E. Selbstkonzept</b>					
1. Schlechtes Gefühl über sich selbst					
2. Frustration über sich selbst					
3. Entmutigung					
4. Unglücklichsein mit dem eigenen Leben					
5. Gefühl der Inkompetenz					
<b>F. Soziales</b>					
1. In Streitigkeiten geraten					
2. Schwierigkeiten in der Zusammenarbeit					
3. Schwierigkeiten, mit anderen Leuten klar zu kommen					
4. Probleme, mit anderen Leuten zusammen Spaß zu haben					
5. Probleme, an Hobbys teilzunehmen					
6. Probleme, Freundschaften zu schließen					
7. Probleme, Freundschaften zu erhalten					
8. Unangemessene Äußerungen					
9. Beschwerden von Nachbarn					
<b>G. Risikoverhalten</b>					
1. Aggressives Autofahren					
2. Beim Autofahren sich mit anderen Dingen beschäftigen					
3. Wütend beim Autofahren werden					
4. Beschädigung oder Zerstörung von Gegenständen					
5. Illegale Handlungen					
6. Polizeikontakte					
7. Zigaretten rauchen					
8. Marijuana rauchen					

9. Alkohol trinken					
10. Illegale Drogen einnehmen					
11. Ungeschützter Sex (Verhütungsmittel, Kondom)					
12. Sexuell unangemessenes Verhalten					
13. Körperliche Aggressivität					
14. Verbale Aggressivität					

## B. Interview questions

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Which gender do you feel you belong to?  
0 Man, 1 Woman, 2 Divers
- 3) Did you grow up in Germany?  
0 yes, 1 no  
  
Do you have a migration background?  
1 D, 2 Migration
- 4) How would you describe the socio-economic status of your...  
1 Very low status, 2 Below-average status, 3 Slightly below-average status, 4 Average status, 5 Slightly above-average status, 6 Above-average status, 7 Highest status
- 5) What is your own socio-economic status?  
1 Very low status, 2 Below average status, 3 Slightly below average status, 4 Average status, 5 Slightly above average status, 6 Above average status, 7 Highest status
- 6) What is your highest qualification to date?  
0 No school-leaving certificate, 1 Hauptschulabschluss, 2 Realschulabschluss, 3 Abitur, 4 Bachelor/University of Applied Sciences, 5 Master/Diploma, 6 Doctorate
- 7) Do you have siblings/half-siblings?  
0 none , 1 available Gender?  
0 Man, 1 Woman, 2 Divers
- 8) Did your parents stay together until you reached the age of majority?  
0 yes; 1 no; 2 other (e.g. separation for other reasons: death; separation afterwards)  
  
If no: How old were you when you separated/divorced?
- 9) Did your parents' parents stay together?  
0 yes; 1 no; 2 other (e.g. separation for other reasons: death; separation afterwards)
- 10) How is/was the relationship with your mother  
1 extremely poor, 2 very poor, 3 poor, 4 average, 5 good, 6 very good, 7 excellent
- 11) How is/was the relationship with your father  
1 extremely poor, 2 very poor, 3 poor, 4 average, 5 good, 6 very good, 7 excellent
- 12) Due to your experiences at home, you feel emotionally...  
1 extremely poor, 2 very poor, 3 poor, 4 average, 5 good, 6 very good, 7 excellent

- 13) How do you feel about your mental health?  
1 extremely poor, 2 very poor, 3 poor, 4 average, 5 good, 6 very good, 7 excellent
- 14) How do you feel in terms of your physical health?  
1 extremely poor, 2 very poor, 3 poor, 4 average, 5 good, 6 very good, 7 excellent
- 15) Are you/were you undergoing psychological/psychiatric treatment?  
0 no, 1 yes  
15a) If yes, why and for how long? What was the diagnosis?  
0 none, 1 depression, 2 other affective disorders, 3 anxiety disorder, 4 adjustment disorder, 5 ADHD, 6 PTSD, 7 others
- 16) Do you have severe physical complaints?  
0 no, 1 yes
- 17) How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parents' home?  
1 Very low KS, 2 Below-average KS, 3 Slightly below-average KS, 4 Average KS, 5 Slightly above-average KS, 6 Above-average KS, 7 Highest KS
- 18) Have your parents involved you or the children in the parental conflict?  
1 practically not/unconsciously, 2 very little, 3 little, 4 medium, 5 strong, 6 very strong, 7 extreme
- 19) How much conflict protection did you experience overall as a child?  
1 Highest KoS, 2 Above-average KoS, 3 Slightly above-average KoS, 4 Average KoS, 5 Slightly below-average KoS, 6 Below-average KoS, 7 Very low KoS
- 20) How much attention did you receive as a child?  
1 Highest ZwS level, 2 Above-average ZwS, 3 Slightly above-average ZwS, 4 Average ZwS, 5 Slightly below-average ZwS, 6 Below-average ZwS, 7 Very low ZwS
- 21) How strong is your current bond with your carers?  
1 Highest BindS level, 2 Above average BindS, 3 Slightly above average BindS, 4 Average BindS, 5 Slightly below average BindS, 6 Below average BindS, 7 Very low BindS
- 22) How much contact do you currently have with your carers?  
1 Highest Bz level, 2 Above-average BzS, 3 Slightly above-average BzS, 4 Average BzS, 5 Slightly below-average BzS, 6 Below-average BzS, 7 Very low BzS
- 23) Have you had contact as a child with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts, etc.?  
0 no, 1 yes
- 24) Would you use the professionals again or recommend them to others?  
0 no, 1 yes
- 25) How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own/your biological family?  
1 Very low KS, 2 Below-average KS, 3 Slightly below-average KS, 4 Average KS, 5 Slightly above-average KS, 6 Above-average KS, 7 Highest KS
- 26) Have you or the other parent involved the children in the parental conflict?  
1 practically not/unconsciously, 2 very little, 3 little, 4 medium, 5 strong, 6 very strong, 7 extreme
- 27) How much conflict protection have your children experienced overall?  
1 Highest KoS, 2 Above-average KoS, 3 Slightly above-average KoS, 4 Average KoS, 5 Slightly below-average KoS, 6 Below-average KoS, 7 Very low KoS
- 28) How much attention did your children receive overall?





## D. Interviews

### 1.

Note: Pronouns of the child have been neutralised (das/ mein Kind/ es) to preserve anonymity. Furthermore, attempts were made to make ages, places of residence, numbers of siblings, years and other personal details unrecognisable.

### 2.

### 3.

#### 1. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV01

### Greeting

**Interviewer:** OK, great and. Then I'd say let's start straight away. How old are you? **Interviewee:** I'm in my mid-thirties.

**Interviewer:** OK, and which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, woman, diverse?

**Respondent:** Man.

**Interviewer:** Okay. You grew up in Germany, but do you have a migration background?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then it's a bit about your parental home, namely how would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parental home in terms of education, income and occupation. Very low status, below average status, slightly below average status, average status, slightly above average status, above average...

**Proband:** Slightly above slightly above average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK and for yourself, so your own socio-economic status.

**Respondent:** Please define the status briefly. Socio-ecological is part of it, I say, everything is part of it financially as well as the social environment, right?

**Interviewer:** Exactly, so it concerns education, income, profession, in other words, simply how you assess it, so also your personal assessment.

**Test person:** Well, OK, then that fits, then I'm right, I wasn't one hundred per cent sure just now, but OK, then mine fits, then I know the definition. And now, how I assess my current situation. Mhm, yes, also slightly above average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK.

**Proband:** What is the definition after that? After slightly above average.

**Interviewer:** After slightly above average would be above average.

**Test person:** Yes, then it's above average for me.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Your highest qualification to date, a school-leaving certificate, a school-leaving certificate, secondary school leaving certificate, A-levels, Bachelor's degree or Master's degree from a university of applied sciences.

**Proband:** Bachelor.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK, do you have any siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** Yes, I have siblings.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. And what age?

**Test person:** He's younger, in his early thirties.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and does he clearly categorise himself as male?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did your parents stay together until you reached the age of majority?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. And how was your relationship with your mother? Extremely bad, very bad, bad, moderately good or very good.

**Test person:** Yes, then very good.

**Interviewer:** There is also an excellent.

**Test person:** Very good. No, very good.

### Minute 5

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK, how would you justify that? So, how would you describe your relationship

with your mum?

**Proband:** Open, loving, harmonious. Yes, just as it should be.

**Interviewer:** Ok, very nice. And the same with your father?

**Test person:** Mhm, yes, that's exactly how I would categorise it.

**Interviewer:** So also a very good relationship.

**Test person:** Yes, an even closer bond with my father. There are special reasons for this in your case, as he was ill, became ill, was unable to work and was also absent from time to time due to retraining. And that brought us even closer together. So the connection to my father is even closer.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. How do you feel or how did your experiences at home prepare or equip you for adult life? Extremely poor, very poor, poor. Or average, very good or even excellent.

**Proband:** Good.

**Interviewer:** OK then. Then it's now about how they're doing at the moment. How is your mental health? Again, categorise it as extremely poor, very poor, poor, average, very good or excellent.

**Proband:** Dependent on the situation. But I would say bad at the moment.

**Interviewer:** OK, can you explain why?

**Test person:** Yes, depending on the situation due to the estrangement with my son. And that means there are always days when I'm not so burdened by the situation. And there are days that are very stressful. That would be my explanation.

**Interviewer:** Okay, understandable and the same on a physical level. How do you feel physically? Do you have any physical complaints or how would you describe that?

**Test person:** Yes, I have physical complaints due to this situation. Essentially sleep disorders and situational nervousness and yes, reactions to stress. So I say a lot of scratching and things like that. And generally speaking, apart from these situational issues. I actually feel good physically. I do a lot of sport and so on, so basically I feel good.

**Interviewer:** Very nice. Are you or were you undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** No, okay. Then let's talk about your parental home - were there conflicts in your parental home? So the ones that you experienced or felt as a child here, for example. If so, very low conflict situations, below average conflict situations, slightly below average, average conflict situations, slightly above average conflict situations, above average conflict situations or the highest level.

**Respondent:** Mhm, I would say, no, I was there, I didn't have any conflicts during my childhood.

**Interviewer:** OK. Then it goes straight on down here, because the rest relates to a parental conflict that you may have experienced. How much affection do you think you received as a child overall, the highest level of affection, above-average affection, slightly above-average affection? Average level of affection. Perhaps a below-average level of affection, below average or very low?

**Proband:** Average

**Interviewer:** OK. How strong is your current attachment to an attachment figure or to your attachment figure from childhood? The highest attachment level -

**Respondent:** So you also mean towards parents?

**Interviewer:** Mhm, exactly one above-average attachment level one average.

**Respondent:** Yes, OK. Above average, yes.

### Minute 10

**Interviewer:** OK. Very nice. Mhm, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices or similar when you were a child?

**Proband:** No

**Interviewer:** OK, very nice, well that was just to get to know your childhood a bit beforehand. And now it's about the situation in your own family, in your biological family. Mhm, how would you rate the conflict situation there? Very low conflict situation, below average conflict situations, slightly below average, slightly above average, above average or highest conflict situations?

**Proband:** highest

**Interviewer:** And did you or the other parent involve the children in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** Yes, the other parent.

**Interviewer:** OK. How strongly do you rate this involvement? That it happens unconsciously. Very little, little means, strong, very strong or extreme?

**Respondent:** So the question is. Did it happen consciously that my son was involved by the other parent, then I say. Yes, he was, he was deliberately involved.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and how strongly do you estimate that, so how strongly was he influenced, right? Yes, in -

**Test person:** That's very difficult again. Yes, that's difficult. Sometimes it's very, very strong depending on the situation, sometimes not so much. So that's the thing about above average and so on?

**Interviewer:** Mhm, exactly.

**Test person:** Then I would say an above-average amount, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, well, how much conflict protection has your child experienced overall in this situation? How would you rate that? The highest level of conflict protection. Above-average conflict protection, slightly above-average, average, slightly below-average, below-average or very little, i.e. very little conflict protection.

**Proband:** This conflict protection means whether it was virtually prevented. Then below average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm Mhm, how much attention did your child receive overall? So now before the alienation, before the separation. Highest level of affection. Above average, slightly above average...

**Proband:** Slightly above average from me now.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK, and how do you assess that during the separation phase? Or even now.

**Proband:** During the separation phase. From me...a little less.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK and from your former partner. How do you rate that?

**Proband:** The highest level, the one that goes above mother, that's how I would put it.

**Interviewer:** OK. Does your child have a carer? I assume the mother, if the child is still alive.

**Respondent:** Yes, the one that the mother mainly yes.

**Interviewer:** And can you estimate how strong the current bond with this carer is?

**Test person:** Very, very, very, very strong okay. So above average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. And yes, of course we are still in contact. Do you have contact with the family court, youth welfare office, lawyer or similar due to the situation?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And in what form?

**Respondent:** I had. I've been in contact with the youth welfare office since now, we're at the end of 23, since the end of 22, but not much has happened or things have been ignored. Then I got in touch with the lawyer and since February of this year, I've had the court hearing, that's the points of contact with this institute, before that there was mediation, counselling. Counselling etc. Unfortunately, that didn't help us.

### Minute 15

**Interviewer:** Didn't it help because the situation between you and your ex-partner had hardened so much? Or do you think that the youth welfare office could have provided better support or more counselling?

**Respondent:** Both, so the situation is hardened. Because she blocks everything. There is a mediation experience that we worked out together at, which she never signed, saying that what it says is not acceptable to her. But it was never communicated by her side. Only at the court hearing or at the youth welfare office and the youth welfare office gave it. I now have the third employee within this one year or so. The youth welfare office was very slow, there were discussions. But nothing ever happened. So the agreements were only partially honoured by her. And yes, but there were no consequences. So the youth welfare office, the toothless tiger, I would say.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's a pity. You meant somehow mediation from, from which side did this support come?

**Test person:** Interestingly enough, I've been affected by this since 2020 and interestingly enough, I started looking for help with my new partner in 2020 because the situation started there. We then went to a parent counselling centre. Interestingly, I now come from a rural area. She [ex-partner] had apparently been to this parent counselling centre a week earlier and also sought help, independently of each other. And we did this parent counselling. The parent counselling was difficult because it was an older lady who, of course, had a corresponding attitude to what a family should look like. And represented the classic role model. So I was told something along the lines of: "Well, if mum says that, then you have to stick to it..." and something like between the lines, you earn the money and then

please shut up and the child belongs to mum. But then, thank God, she retired.

After that we did a mediation, which was delayed by postponements etc. It dragged on for a year and a half, then there was this mediation agreement, which, as I said, was never implemented by her side and was never signed.

And then there was another counselling session initiated by her side, which I also gave to the.

Certainly the one opposite. Yes, I'll say the time was 34 months, there were 2 appointments, one appointment with the parents, one appointment with the mother and my child and the third appointment was supposed to be with me and my child, but she refused or cancelled it because, from my point of view, the lady who did it addressed two issues, which of course weren't the right ones, as they wanted.

Instead of yes, and then there were personal conversations that I tried to have, where I stood at a closed door, at the appointment, these are the things that I did beforehand, before at some point after a long time, unfortunately too late, I have to say today, I consulted the youth welfare office or just my lawyer.

**Interviewer:** Was the lawyer able to achieve anything? Was he able to help?

**Proband:** Not yet. As I said, there was this court hearing where the mother was told quite clearly that the visits should take place, every 2 weeks for 8 hours. At the moment it's in a state of limbo, my child is now going or should be going to some kind of child psychologist, child therapist, there should be appointments, that's been going on since May.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Proband:** There was only one appointment with him, then we parents attended 2 appointments, the rest were cancelled and now there is to be a fifth appointment next week, where we parents are to receive the findings. And then it will go to court and then there will be a new court date. But I haven't had any contact with my child since August.

**Interviewer:** Because it was ordered by the court or because the child's mother refuses?

## Minute 20

**Test person:** Because when I go to my child's house, he doesn't want to come with me and is very, very aggressive towards me and doesn't want to come with me. But my child is only so aggressive when mum is there.

Apart from that, I visit my child at sports training twice a week if possible and watch briefly. And he greets me there, my child talks to me, always assuming she [the child's mother] isn't there and that's the situation at the moment. So I haven't had any contact or contact with my child since August.

**Interviewer:** So they assume that the child's mother is being manipulated and that's why they stand by her.

**Test person:** Yes, yes, I have to say that, unfortunately, and there are enough signs of that, because both on, I say, it used to be like that, now because of Corona it has become a bit more digital at our school, but then it was like that, for example: At the parents' consultation day there were the notes in knapsacks. I never got that. Then I suddenly realised that friends had told me that it was parent-teacher conferences.

Whenever I communicated with her, the mobile phone was on loud. Then my child would tell me off for scolding her mum or for seeing things differently.

Then the paediatrician was changed when I went to the old paediatrician and asked for information. Then, when I had contact, I stood in front of a locked door. Then they went on holiday without giving me any information or asking me... I can list countless things, unfortunately I've been keeping a diary about it for 2 years now.

**Interviewer:** In order to get this clear for yourself or, in inverted commas, to "have something in your hand" if it somehow....

**Test person:** Both. So on the one hand, to have that for court etc., because I tend, or probably every person who experiences something like that, to repress such traumatised events and then perhaps simply no longer know or want to reproduce everything one hundred percent. Somewhere, of course, it sits on the other side, perhaps so that I can say at some point. When my child says, in 10 years' time, why weren't you there for me, to have a little something there too. Although I think the Kappen, the Jorge was also at a meeting in Hamburg, where I'm always present or often present and I've already spoken to someone else about it, of course it's always a balancing act, do I show you this, don't I show you that, but at least I want to have something somewhere.

**Interviewer:** How old is your child?

**Proband:** This is now under 10 years old in autumn.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and how old was the child at the time of the separation? How long ago was that?

**Proband:** The child was under the age of three at the time of alienation.

**Interviewer:** OK, so it's been a very long process now.

**Respondent:** Yes, sorry, not during the estrangement, sorry, at the time of separation the child was under 3 and since the estrangement started, yes, that was in the middle of 2020, so yes 3 years, so it was over 5.

**Interviewer:** You already mentioned that you are currently in a new relationship. How much support do you feel from this new relationship? How strong is the support, the highest level of support?

**Test person:** The highest. She's fully behind it, she helps me. I think if I didn't have her. If you had already committed me, I'm afraid to say.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Test person:** She used to have very, very, very good contact with my child, which was also important to me, actually. For me, it was also an important criterion for new relationships, but that's no longer the case since the estrangement.

### Minute 25

**Interviewer:** Because the child's mother also prevents that, doesn't she?

**Test person:** Yes, so even when I say my child was between since 2020, when we were still on holiday, everything was great. When my child came to us here, my child hugged her without us saying anything. He went there voluntarily, said "Hello and how are you" and so on and they also lay together on the couch, arm in arm, my child cuddled up, as I said we never forced it, it was all from the child and since 2020 we have gradually realised that, most recently, when he was here with us at the beginning of the year, my child didn't even look me in the eye, didn't even say "hello" anymore. And we're both [respondent and new partner] actually sure that the alienation has something to do with her [the child's mother] because my child accepts the new partner so well, because he's jealous and all that. That's possible.

**Interviewer:** That stands to reason if it was different before.

**Test person:** Exactly, yes.

**Interviewer:** How would you rate it, how stressful was the separation for your child? Very low stress level, below average stress level, slightly below average stress level, average stress level, slightly above average stress level.

**Proband:** Easy, easy, below average, I would say. Because my child was still small.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, that has hm.

**Respondent:** And I also have yes, sorry, please.

**Interviewer:** Because it wasn't so heavily involved in the process at the time or so heavily influenced, was it?

**Test person:** Exactly right. And because afterwards I also, as I just said, we live in a rural area. My parents, I then moved out and my parents, when they separated from me and my parents live nearby, I lived there for six months. Then I was lucky enough to find a flat in the same town by a stroke of luck, so I was very close by. And my child always saw me in between and we had regular contact, yes, except that I didn't sleep there any more, and we also went on some outings with him, even the three of us.

That's why I say that now. And the fact that my child was so young, I know from a friend, they split up when the children were already older, they were more aware of it at almost 10 years old, it was more difficult. I hope, or at least I think it was my feeling at the time, that that's why the load was low.

**Interviewer:** What do you think, why or how did it come about that this, this, this discord came about or was forced by your ex-partner? If things were obviously better at the beginning, directly after the break-up, then you had an idea why it tipped over at some point.

**Respondent:** Jealousy plays a role. Fear of loss plays a role, the need for recognition, these are, these are all such, such issues. Why that, why that happened. So I can give you a striking example: we were still on good terms in the summer of 2020. We were all at the school enrolment party, including my current partner, my parents and she invited us over for coffee. And she asked my child, who would you

like to sit next to you? The child was sitting at the front of the table and he said, "I would like [name of the subject's new partner] to sit next to me". Who should sit on the other side? Then it was granddad, that's my father.

**Interviewer:** Mhm

**Respondent:** And that was the second time everything fell out of her face. And then afterwards, my child wanted to have a story read to her and then she [the child's mother] said: "Yes [child's name], then I'll read you the story." [The child responded] "No, no, I want [name of the subject's new partner] to read me the story."

Yes, and that's one such situation in the summer of 2020 and then there was another situation. I can't remember where it was, it was similar, and since the last time we were on holiday in autumn, when we came back after that, 2 weeks, it was over.

**Interviewer:** So, in your opinion, it is more directed against your new partner than against you.

**Proband:** But against both. It is one of the reasons.

### Minute 30

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** For me, for me it's more the issue that she says, I don't have any money, I can afford less, you have a great job. Not me. Even though I did so much for it back then. Even though she had all the freedom back then, with my parents and so on. But she never used it because both grandparents were within easy reach, healthy. But that's more what she's projecting to a certain extent in order to get one over on me, I'd say.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you receive any support in this situation? So you lived with your parents after the separation. Did you have any other support or people who were there for you, who supported you along the way?

**Test person:** Yes, my parents of course. Now, during the estrangement or the separation?

**Interviewer:** For both.

**Respondent:** Oh, yes, basically when we separated it was of course my parents, my sibling and my spouse. And afterwards, during the estrangement, it was exactly the same people plus my girlfriend, of course.

And my best friend or my longest-standing friend, who also listens a lot. And in the meantime, through all the networks, I've also been meeting other people affected in Hamburg. But it was only when I realised or became aware of it via social media that this issue could be, or is, alienation. That's why I talk to many affected parents, mums and dads alike, and exchange ideas.

**Interviewer:** Yes, very good. Yes, it's good that you have one, that you have support and there are always phases when you have less contact and that's probably normal during a separation, even with the children, but that you have also recognised in which direction this is going or in which direction the ex-partner is steering it and that you definitely have support there. So are you currently in contact?

**Proband:** Only via a messenger service or if she [the child's mother] happens to be at the training location.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK and you still try to see your child regularly?

**Test person:** Yes, well, I still go there every two weeks, just like the court said. In principle, I have to say, I'm then abused for half an hour with the worst words. And I try there or then, but calmly and have almost always managed, with a few exceptions, to calm my child down a bit and then briefly "talk normally" with the child. In inverted commas.

But then I went too. As I said, summer was the last time my child came with me and otherwise I drive to the training centre twice a week or to sport at the weekend, even if I don't have time, and try to be there to cheer my child on. And if mum isn't there, then she also says hello and waves... "Hello dad". And now, last week, I briefly exchanged two sentences, but that's the only contact I have with my child at the moment.

**Interviewer:** So do you notice, this is not a question of the questionnaire, do you somehow notice a certain remorse or that the child behaves in the same way as usual?

**Test person:** Yes, you notice that, you notice that too. So August or so I said, was the last time before that, my child wasn't there for the whole summer holidays either. So basically this year, since the court hearing, I don't know, maybe I've had five visits. You can tell when my child comes. He's insecure because he knows what he's done. So I don't blame my child because I know why he reacts that way or I think I know why he reacts that way. But my child sometimes walks past you with its head down and

can't look you in the eye. And it's exactly the same when I go to pick up my child on Saturdays, when he often doesn't say many things to me or says many things. But at the moment they don't make eye contact because they can't look you in the eye.

### **Minute 35**

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how, how stressful is the situation for you?

**Test person:** Very much on these days.

**Interviewer:** Also OK. So probably also above average, because -

**Test person:** Yes, extremely so on these days.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Proband:** So that I often can't sleep properly from Saturday to Friday. Then, of course, Saturday is always rubbish, sorry. And yes, then it gradually gets better again. Like last week, for example.

Because my child just said 'hello' to me and so on, but I haven't seen her or had any other contact. I think about my child every day or every hour, but then it's not so stressful.

**Interviewer:** That is also directly noticeable, i.e. sleep disorders, you said that is directly related, other health problems are also directly related to this level of stress when they had contact with their child and were insulted.

**Test person:** Yes, I sometimes have a damaged scalp because I scratch myself like that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK.

**Test person:** That, those are the two things, sleeping badly. Although I also have this sleeping problem from time to time when I have bad dreams about this situation.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how stressful do you think the situation is for your child?

**Proband:** Highly stressful.

**Interviewer:** Highly stressful. OK.

**Proband:** Because he always had good contact with everyone, with his grandad. But he was with his favourite, just like other grandfathers, that's the way most people are. And there was no more contact. Also to my sibling and his partner, uncle, to his godmother on his mother's side. The mother has even broken off contact with them because she once said a few things to her that we didn't like it that way. And then the mother broke off contact with her former best friend and our son's godmother.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, so all those who don't agree and somehow go along with it, yes. Well, we're done with the questions on the questionnaire so far, are there anything else you would like to say or have a question about during the interview?

**Test person:** No, not really. Well, I, like probably everyone else who is affected by it, could tell you so much, so.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think so.

**Proband:** Give more. Yes, so I wouldn't be able to think of anything else right now. Apart from that, I can only advise anyone else who is affected to seek help or socialise with others.

**Interviewer:** What kind of help did you actually find helpful? You said you didn't have such good experiences with the youth welfare office. But which networks can you recommend to those affected?

**Test person:** Yes, it's always very different. My first experience when I first became aware of the topic was in a group in Essen, where they were rather, I don't want to say radical, but they had a very extreme attitude, including towards women. The men who were there also wanted to get one over on the system. Then I was in a group in Dortmund, there were only fathers in that case, but it was more humane, it was also about the cause and the best thing that helped me was this meeting in Hamburg, organised by the one person affected. There were fifty-fifty mums and dads there and we all told the stories for the first time and I wasn't that badly affected then. We cried then, it was as if we had known each other for years and it actually always helped me the most. So even when I talk to family and so on, it's not the same as when I talk to an affected parent, because only they can really understand what you're feeling and experiencing at that moment.

### **Farewell**

#### **Minute 40**

## **2. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV02**

### **Greeting**

**Respondent:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** So that we can then analyse it. If you don't want to say anything about something, that's fine of course. Then just say so and for some of them I'll give a brief explanation of the selection criteria for the questions.

**Test person:** All clear

**Interviewer:** First of all, I have to ask you, because this was new information for the selection of test subjects. The first thing I have to ask is whether there was domestic violence on the part of the partner... on their part, which was either reported or not. Were there any accidents?

**Respondent:** -From the parent. Well, I'm here because I'm here because I experienced the issue of parent-child alienation as a child from my own perspective. And now it's about the - .... yes.

**Interviewer:** The last sentence was somehow lost. The connection wasn't so good.

**Proband:** Oh, yes, please wait a minute, I want to make sure again, I don't have such great WLAN here, I have a router, I think I forgot to set it, I'll plug it in for a minute, just a moment.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Proband:** Otherwise we'll have to restart the recording right away so that it's not delayed, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Test subject:** So, here I am again.

**Interviewer:** Mhm

**Respondent:** I hope it might get better now. So back to my question, I'm here, um, because as a child I experienced something like parent-child alienation. At least that's what I now categorise according to what I've heard and understood and it's now about domestic violence from my parents towards me, for example, if someone had slapped me in the face or something like that. Does that count as domestic violence for you, or what else do you mean by that?

## Minute 2

**Interviewer:** No. It's more about whether they have either experienced domestic violence towards their spouse or carried it out themselves. Um, so we're not talking about a slap in the face, which was more the case in previous generations. So there -

**Test person:** I see. So whether I, that I have now experienced this with my spouse.

**Interviewer:** Yes, or to their children.

**Respondent:** Me or my partner?

**Interviewer:** Both and either you with your partner or your partner with you.

**Test person:** OK, yes, I did.

**Interviewer:** Yes, you did. Okay.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So you experienced it from your partner?

**Test person:** Well, I have experienced that an argument between me and my partner has led to physical escalation and we became violent. Yes, I have experienced that.

**Interviewer:** OK, but it can't be reported?

**Test person:** Nope, nope

**Interviewer:** Mhm, okay

**Respondent:** Eh no, it came, it didn't come to any charges, no.

**Interviewer:** Yes, well, then I would still continue the interview as normal. Then we'll just have that information for ourselves. OK, then I would start the interview now.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how old are you?

**Proband:** Good question, under 50.

**Interviewer:** Very good haha, like me, I always have to think about it first because it's so irrelevant.

**Test person:** Yes, really

**Interviewer:** OK, which gender do you feel you belong to, man, woman or diverse?

**Proband:** Man.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you grow up in Germany or do you have a migrant background?

**Test person:** Well, I grew up in Germany and I don't have a migration background.

**Interviewer:** OK, how would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parents' home in terms of education, income or profession or occupation? Very low status, below average status, slightly below average status, average status, slightly above average status, above average status or



highest status.

#### Minute 4

**Test person:** Erm what what where ...haha the orientation...so -

**Interviewer:** Unfortunately we don't have any -

**Respondent:** Excuse me? Yes, please tell me.

**Interviewer:** Unfortunately, we don't have any guidelines. So that's purely an interpretation on their part.

**Respondent:** So in terms of education and...um ehh.

**Interviewer:** Income and occupation, exactly.

**Test person:** Yes then. Yes, then that's exactly above average. Above average is something between more than average, but not over the top either.

**Interviewer:** Yes, exactly. We still have slightly above average.

**Test person:** Yes, I think that's good.

**Interviewer:** I think that's good. OK, then we'll take that. And the same with your own socio-economic status? Same criteria.

**Test person:** No, average.

**Interviewer:** OK...What is your highest qualification to date? No school-leaving certificate, -

**Proband:** A-levels.

**Interviewer:** Excuse me?

**Proband:** A-levels.

**Interviewer:** Abitur OK, do you have siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** I have siblings and step-siblings.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how old are they?

**Proband:** All younger.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

[...]

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did your parents stay together until you were of age?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** No, okay. Is there a particular reason or separation, death, or what?

**Proband:** Yes, they split up.

**Interviewer:** Ok um then the question is, how was or is the relationship with your mother?

Extremely bad, very bad, bad, medium good, very good or excellent,

**Proband:** Medium.

**Interviewer:** Medium okay. So is there a particular reason or do you just appreciate it in the classic way? A very classic mother-son relationship?

**Test person:** No, my mum is no longer alive, she's been dead since 20010 and the relationship was over. Yes, there is a reason, she was an alcoholic and I also experienced that my parents portrayed her as very, very bad and I also had a very divided relationship with her because of the experiences. So in the end, because of her illness and the cancer she had, I sort of made peace with her, but the relationship wasn't particularly great.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes. Yes, probably not the kind of mother you would imagine, right?

**Proband:** Joa.

**Interviewer:** Yes, good, and about your father. What do you think about that?

**Respondent:** Say the gradations again.

**Interviewer:** Extremely poor, very poor, poor, average, good, very good or excellent.

**Proband:** Good.

**Interviewer:** She was good, so you had a better relationship with her father?

**Test person:** Well, I still have a relationship with my father because he's alive, and that's good today.

**Interviewer:** Very nice and the experience at home makes them feel emotionally extremely bad, very bad, bad, average, good, very good or excellent. So it. Now about how emotionally prepared they feel for adult life.

**Test person:** Oh, no, that's bad.

**Interviewer:** That's bad, OK.

**Test person:** Yes, so the way I feel about having been prepared for adulthood makes me feel

emotionally bad.

### Minute 9

**Interviewer:** OK. Because their mum couldn't be there for them the way they needed her to be. Or because they were in the middle of this separation.

**Respondent:** So the bad thing is expressed by the fact that A: my mother's alcoholism. And B: the fact that I'm caught between two stools, which my parents have very strongly implanted in me through the arguments they've had about me, I don't feel emotionally at all. So I have a hard time finding myself emotionally. It took me a very long time to get to know my needs at all. Good. And because of my upbringing and experiences at home... I simply couldn't be the way I probably wanted to be as a child. So a lot of stress there.

**Interviewer:** Yes, absolutely understandable.

**Proband:** As a burden, arguments about us as children, me as the eldest, who had to bear an incredible amount of responsibility due to alcoholism. So it's a bit of a mixture here. And, um, yes. And exactly, those are the things that didn't prepare me so well for adulthood.

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, I understand that. Um, how do you feel now in terms of your mental health? So it's about the current situation-

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Extremely poor, very poor, poor, average, very good or excellent.

**Proband:** Medium.

**Interviewer:** Medium okay. And physically? So-

**Test person:** Physically, I feel good, so right now I feel good. Yes, yes, although that changes sometimes, of course.

**Interviewer:** No, of course.

**Test person:** So there is a gradation between average and good?

**Interviewer:** Nope haha

**Proband:** No, I'll have to make a quick decision. Write down medium.

**Interviewer:** Are you or have you been in psychological treatment?

**Proband:** Yes.

### Minute 12

**Interviewer:** Yes, um, if I may ask, if so, and for how long and for what reason, simply to work through it, right?

**Test person:** Yes, I've been in psychological treatment several times. Because of depression.

**Interviewer:** Ah okay. Yes good, then we have the next question directly, that was the question about the diagnosis. Um, was or is depression the only diagnosis, right?

**Proband:** I only know these.

**Interviewer:** So anxiety disorder...

**Test person:** Yes, I have ... I was told again by my youth therapist, post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Proband:** In my youth and later it was the diagnosis I knew. At least it was MTD depression, so recurrences too.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, okay um do you have any severe physical complaints? No or yes?

**Proband:** Current now, right?

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes.

**Proband:** Ne.

**Interviewer:** Not right now.

**Test person:** Not at the moment, but I have had a lot of complaints from time to time.

**Interviewer:** OK, if I may ask, which one?

**Test person:** I had slipped discs very early on.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Proband:** Already at 18.

**Interviewer:** Ah, that's really very early.

**Test person:** Yes, that's early. Erm I had...um eh ... Yes, I had heartburn for a long time. Erm what else did I have? I just have to think about it. I had anxiety about anxiety, well, anxiety disorders somehow, but they weren't diagnosed because I wasn't in therapy. I also had um yeah, something like that. Um, then I had. Yeah, what else did I have, I had... what's it called? Frozen shoulder, so every now and then.

**Interviewer:** So recurring complaints.

**Test person:** Yes, not me recurring, but always some physical things that also affected me severely.

#### Minute 14

**Interviewer:** But everything is fine right now. That's nice.

**Test person:** Yes, so now it is now, it has also been the case for some time that the physical complaints, if I have any, i.e. a cold, illness or something like that, go away again relatively quickly. It doesn't last long, it was different before, I was ill a lot before.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes of course, the psyche is also reflected in the body.

**Test person:** Mhm, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Okay, let's continue with the questions.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parents' home? Was it a very low conflict situation, a below-average one? Slightly below average average, slightly above average, above average or highest conflict situation.

**Respondent:** In relation to whom?

**Interviewer:** In general, simply in relation to their parental home, i.e. the situation of their parents.

**Test person:** Yes, highest, so it was um, it was very, very conflict-ridden.

**Interviewer:** So you would say above average or highest.

**Proband:** Highest.

**Interviewer:** Highest OK, um you had already said that, the next question um, did your parents involve you in the parental conflict, you said that this is or was very much the case.

**Test person:** Yes, you have.

**Interviewer:** Yes, we also have a categorisation here. Practically not or unconsciously, very little, little, medium, strong, very strong or extreme.

**Respondent:** What was um um I, I don't know yet what you mean by the question, whether you did it consciously?

**Interviewer:** It's about the parental conflict, i.e. the situation between their parents.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** To what extent your parents involved you in their conflicts, i.e. the conflict that your parents had together.

**Test person:** Yes, you're full of it. So I just remember that you shared a lot of it.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, so you would categorise it as very strong or even extreme.

**Test person:** No, not at all. No, then. Well, yes, it was always latently there, so it's more than average, but it's not like it was there every day.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** But it wasn't a free relationship, it was always there, in the top region.

**Interviewer:** And did you also experience conflict protection as a child, i.e. that someone protected you from the whole thing?

#### Minute 17

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Um, how would-

**Test person:** Well, not protected, but um I have um. We also experienced someone, I had someone at my side who helped us at least for a certain period of time, and that even into old age.

**Interviewer:** Yes OK, very good.

**Test person:** Well, no. There was no protection from it, no, so that wasn't the case, but we knew we could turn to people.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, okay, how would you rate that? Above-average protection, above-average

protection, slightly below-average protection or below-average protection.

**Test person:** It wasn't, as I said, it wasn't protection, so it didn't prevent me from being assaulted.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, ah OK. So when you say no real protection at all, simply that they had a bit of support ... had.

**Proband:** Yes-

**Interviewer:** Mhm, that fits more with the next-

**Test person:** It's not classic, no. So it's not like that. I had a legal adviser who helped me, so it's not like that now, for example, but it was just like that, if it helps you to categorise the question, during the time my mother was in withdrawal, we had something like a foster mother.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Respondent:** - She didn't get involved in the conflict, so she didn't. So she didn't get involved in the conflicts or anything like that. So she was careful. In that respect, it wasn't protection from the situation. It was a contact person, so there was little protection.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think that belongs to the next question. How much attention did you receive overall as a child? Erm.

**Proband:** Who specifies this?

**Interviewer:** It is not specified at all. It's general. How much attention did you receive as a child? Maximum attention, above-average attention, slightly above-average attention, average attention or slightly below-average attention, then there is also below-average or very low, so simply if you compare it perhaps with... other children...

**Respondent:** Yes, that's, well, I would say that we received an average amount of attention, um, because the question was not made clear by whom, um-

**Interviewer:** Mhm, exactly.

**Test person:** Yes, but we still received a lot of attention. So up to a certain age, my mum was still able to do something and made a lot of effort. But then at some point she didn't and it was a long childhood, wasn't it? [20:28:00]

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's right. Um, now there's a question that we had a bit of a struggle with ourselves because we don't know exactly who is meant by that. How strong is your current bond with your attachment figure? In other words, a person with whom you had a relationship at the time, who perhaps also accompanied you at the time. Do you still have a bond with this person today?

**Proband:** So the one who's still alive?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Respondent:** Okay, um. And how is the bond meant? So.

**Interviewer:** Yes, simply if there was a caregiver back then with whom they still have a bond. How strong this bond is.

**Respondent:** Yes OK, what are the gradations?

**Interviewer:** This is also the highest attachment level above average attachment level, slightly above average attachment level, average attachment level, slightly below average attachment level, below average attachment level or very low.

**Proband:** Very low.

**Interviewer:** Very low, OK.

**Respondent:** Well, I understand that now as low as it sounds, it sounds to me um so-

**Interviewer:** Barely.

**Proband:** Excuse me?

**Interviewer:** After hardly any contact. So if you meet when you're out shopping, you say hello to , but that's about it.

**Test person:** No, not that. Okay, so it's not the case that I call my father all the time, for example. We hear each other after a quarter of a year, I try to make contact with him, with the children. So we have, yes then please do something a bit higher, but it's not like I think about calling my father all the time.

**Interviewer:** OK, so rather slightly below average or then average commitment level?

**Respondent:** Yes, through, then you do an average, because we already have, I would say a completely normal relationship, but we don't have constant contact. Like that, but it's like this.

**Interviewer:** Normal.

**Test person:** Yes, but my father and my step-siblings, for example, they have much more contact. So the relationship is much better there, or when I look at my wife and her father, they see each other once a week.

## Minute 22

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Without wanting to go into clichés. But I think women are generally a bit more communicative. So when I see my husband, he only calls his father when something happens. The other ....

**Test person:** Yes, of course that could be the case. Could be, yes.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm, OK. Now it goes on, so to speak, with their own family. Erm, no, not yet, whether they had contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers or experts as a child.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** You said a bit earlier, no, that there was already contact. And um, in what form, i.e. who did you have contact with?

**Test person:** Well, my foster mother was, um, she was the social pedagogue, so to speak, but not because she was with us, because she came from the office, but because it suited her. I had contact with the court because of my parents' divorce. I had contact... with the... until 18 or until when?

**Interviewer:** Yes, let's go along until 18.

**Proband:** After so to 18 yes through that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm

**Respondent:** And through, indirectly through the fact that, um, my parents were always arguing, they were always writing flags or letters to lawyers. That's how I kept having indirect contact with lawyers and when I was 18 I had contact with a lawyer because my father asked me to sue my mother.

## Minute 24

**Interviewer:** Yes, OK.

**Proband:** On maintenance or more maintenance or something?

**Interviewer:** That her mother should then support her financially.

**Proband:** Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Mhm okay. How would you describe this help or this, this form of help? Was it helpful, unhelpful, supportive, harassing, friendly, warm or uncaring and cold? So how did you feel about this, this contact with the officials or with your foster mother?

**Test person:** Well, you have to differentiate between them. The foster mother also happened to be a social pedagogue, who is a foster mother. But that was a really great thing that my father did. That was a very good contact. Because she was a surrogate mother for us. Mmm. And it was very good, but it wasn't characterised by the fact that we had some kind of procedure, and that's how she was installed, installed as a substitute for the time when my mother was in hospital. That, that there so ne so. That plays into it. Apart from that, I can't say anything about lawyers. I don't know. I can't remember. I didn't have any conversations at the time.

**Interviewer:** Yes, OK.

**Respondent:** It's quiet ne... mhm, would you take the mhm? Exactly. That's what was meant by that, right?

**Interviewer:** Mhm, would you do it again yourself? So would you do it again if you found yourself in a similar situation or would you recommend it to other people affected? To make use of this help.

**Test person:** That's funny that you should ask that. No, it took me a long time to make use of this help, I have it there, I have also made use of it. And I would recommend it, um, with reservations.

**Interviewer:** OK. That means?

**Proband:** I would just do that. So I would recommend everyone to seek help if they need it.

## Minute 27

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK.

**Respondent:** So that means that if you're not getting anywhere in terms of relationships with the other parent, in the relationship or whatever, or with the child or whatever, if you have difficulties, I recommend everyone to get help in a variety of ways. I'd recommend everyone to do that, through which organisation, that's the question - I don't know whether the youth welfare office is the most suitable organisation, but I've had good experiences with organisations like Erziehungshilfen or

something like that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Proband:** Um, and I've also had good experiences with psychologists, but they don't count here, do they?

**Interviewer:** Ne.

**Proband:** And I've also had some good experiences with lawyers. So I would recommend everyone to get help.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK, very good. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own family? So now your own family, which you started yourself, a very low conflict situation, below average conflict situations, slightly below average, average, slightly above average or an above average conflict situation or the highest conflict situation.

**Respondent:** Um, please read the last 3 again.

**Interviewer:** A slightly above-average conflict situation-

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** easy?

**Respondent:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** And did you or another parent involve children in your conflict? You or the other parent? Or both?

**Proband:** The other parent.

**Interviewer:** Ah Okay, good and.

**Proband:** From my perspective, no.

**Interviewer:** It's all just from your perspective. Of course.

**Proband:** Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** And what do you think? How much. Um, was it consciously very little, little, medium, strong, very strong or extreme?

**Test person:** So the question is not clear to me. Is it aimed at whether it was strongly unconscious or whether that, that pulling in was strong. What? The question again exactly.

### Minute 30

**Interviewer:** No, whether it just happened unconsciously, that the children simply noticed, so hey, mum and dad have a conflict. Or did your partner get the children very involved, in your opinion.

**Test person:** So that's the last one. Extremely yes, so already stronger.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how much conflict protection did your children experience overall? So how? To what extent were your children protected?

**Respondent:** Not at all. And no conflict at all.

**Proband:** I've made a lot of effort with regard to myself. Is nothing to. -..... From someone. From the outside.

**Interviewer:** OK. And how much attention did your children receive overall?

**Proband:** A lot.

**Interviewer:** Very much. Highest level, above-average attention, slightly above-average attention or average. I won't read out the others now because they have already said that they receive a lot.

**Test person:** Yes, so that's a bit difficult, isn't it? Because it's not, you don't divide it up, no, um, I would say because they, because they were really very calm in the early years but... Later on, in the whole separation situation, I would say, from whose perspective I'm looking at it now, they probably felt neglected and that's why I give it an average.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Because I think you have to differentiate a little bit. And the question is, what does affection mean in terms of emotional affection, is it, do they feel different financially?

**Interviewer:** That's very general, mum.

**Test person:** Exactly, so that's why it's average, I would say.

**Interviewer:** OK, um, do your children have a carer?

**Respondent:** What do you mean?

**Interviewer:** Do your children have a person they can really always go to, i.e. a reference person?

**Proband:** Outside of the parents?

**Interviewer:** Unfortunately, that is not described here.

**Respondent:** Yes, you have. So you have, you have. So if the question is, what I don't understand is whether you only have one or you have, you have a carer yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, and how strong is your children's attachment? Can you assess whether it is the highest level of attachment, above average, slightly above average or average?

**Test person:** Yes, something between average and below. So I think the bond, it's, it's, it's not that stable above all. I have the feeling that it's just, well, it's, it's average.

### Minute 33

**Interviewer:** How strong is your children's current contact with their caregiver? So you tend to think that it's wobbly at the moment.

**Respondent:** Well then that's, aha, because it's not differentiated who the contact person is.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Respondent:** I would say that contact with the carer is normal because they live here in the family home. So this no, so child 1 lives here, I have normal contact, child 2, I also hear regularly, but K2 has already half moved out and the middle child does not live with me and of course has a lot of contact with the caregiver in the case of the mother, because it lives there, of course, but not so much with me, for example.

**Interviewer:** As a father, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts or similar?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yes, and in what form? So what form did this contact take?

**Proband:** Court, multiple - multiple court proceedings.

**Interviewer:** OK and did you find this help, so you found it helpful. Supportive, harassing. How do you rate that?

**Test person:** I found it helpful.

**Interviewer:** OK, that's easy.

**Test person:** It solved the problems, it didn't solve the problems, but I found it helpful. Because yes, well, because I have, a lot, well, I have before everyone, I have, maybe it's also a special case. For me, I have to say that my children made the most of the opportunities they had.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that you simply received support from the courts and it was helpful for everyone or for you and your children.

**Test person:** So from. perspective, because I looked out more for the children. My children, especially the youngest, have realised how important it is to stand up for themselves in these proceedings.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK.

**Test person:** And that's why I found the space to have this support good, but it didn't solve the problems.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** An example, um, my child has. So it helps you now for the question, -if not. My child has just realised that it's the child of both of us, and she told the judge the same thing and told her to please tell her.

**Interviewer:** OK. So you have-

**Proband:** That was firm.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, do you no longer have contact with all 3 children or do you have contact with one of the children?

**Respondent:** Yes, I have contact with all 3 children, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, but not, not regularly.

**Test person:** Um, in different forms. Because. My children weren't alienated that much because I did it very early on. I was able to uncover it very early but...

### Minute 36

[...]

**Test person:** Exactly, um. The last question was how is the contact with my children. I have contact with my children.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Respondent:** Um, exactly, but for me as a child when I was in that situation, there were years when I had no contact with my parents.

**Interviewer:** Ah, okay mhm.

**Test person:** Well, I understood. I don't know if that's right, I understood that the point of this study was to ask people who had experienced this issue of alienation themselves. But maybe I misunderstood.

**Interviewer:** Um, yes, it's about the alienation issue, but actually more about you and your children.

**Proband:** Oh, right.

**Interviewer:** But there was no alienation at all?

**Test person:** Yes, but um, I could just put up with them.

**Interviewer:** Ah okay, yes good

**Test person:** In my case, the alienation definitely took place. Even with bad situations, which are quite classic with violence, i.e. situations that arose, so to speak, which were then also falsely told to the children, um, as a result of which some children almost turned away in the short term, but because of my previous experience, that I know the topic, I was able to accompany my children very early on so that they could see through it.

**Interviewer:** Mhm

**Respondent:** And that's why our relationship, we have a relationship, but it's not the warmest, but we have one, well, it's a bit more difficult at the moment, but one child lives with me, child 2 also lived with me at the end because the mother moved away. Erm, and we have a relationship. And they've had very different experiences. Child 2 also had to go to therapy and so on...

**Interviewer:** Mhm, may I ask how old child 2 is?

**Proband:** She is over 18.

**Interviewer:** She's over 18, oh okay. Okay, so now I've kind of lost the thread

**Respondent:** Sorry, yes

**Interviewer:** Yes no no everything is fine. It's also good if you do it on the side. It becomes much clearer and you can understand the situation of the interviewee or of them better if you are far removed from the plan here.

**Proband:** Yes, I'm not a classic case nh.

**Interviewer:** Exactly, um, that was the reason why I wanted to be in the study, because I find it very, very exciting. On the one hand from personal experience, but also, um, yes, hopefully we want to achieve something with this study, to see how it is dealt with and then your case is also predestined for this, so that you can perhaps simply look at how you can help better and provide better support, so that the children can have a neutral opinion, even if they are perhaps pulled back and forth a bit by one side.

## Minute 40

**Test person:** Yes, of course, and the other side is just reactive, because it's human nature for the other side to try to straighten things out from their point of view, which is totally human, but it doesn't really belong in front of the children.

**Interviewer:** Mhm absolutely not.

**Proband:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** What has worked in your relationship, so what do you have that has worked in the whole process anyway, or do you have any advice for other people affected that you would say is helpful?

**Test person:** So, um, what worked for me. What has worked for me is to empower the child? And that is to encourage the child to stand up for themselves, to say what they feel and what they think and that they are not afraid of the authority of the adult, that if they say, I don't think that's okay, I don't want that, it doesn't mean that you have to be afraid that the relationship and the bond will break down.

**Interviewer:** Mhm okay

**Test person:** The second part is um, showing understanding. A lot of understanding and, above all, taking myself back, it's so difficult in this situation to discuss your own things with anyone, but not with the children, but to be able to support the children, so that they can um, that they can always say



anything anywhere.

**Interviewer:** Mhm

**Test person:** What has also helped is giving the children a third person. Grandma, grandad, I don't know, who to put by their side. People who have the confidence to listen to the child. It was also the family who supported child 2 in the situation. What I also found helpful was um.

**Interviewer:** mhm.

**Test person:** What helped me most of all was to document things, I often asked myself whether I was still making sense, but um writing things down and getting an understanding of the patterns that were going on was really helpful.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Test person:** What was also helpful in the overall situation was to introduce clear rules that were transparent for everyone and as simple as possible.

### Minute 45

**Interviewer:** Mhm yes .

**Test person:** Um, not to be overturned if possible, as exhausting as that is, but that helps a lot, um, standing up for my rights has also helped a lot.

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Proband:** Admitting your own mistakes.

**Interviewer:** The hardest of all, probably.

**Test person:** Yes, and the last thing is to forgive the other person, so to keep coming back to the point on the spiritual level, the only chance you have is to forgive, um, and yes. Yes, to know that the other person can't do any better than that in the situation, um, it's always what helped me to find peace with my parents.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes

**Respondent:** Nothing else works.

**Interviewer:** Yes, above all because her mother is very important in retrospect. They no longer have the chance to somehow-

**Test person:** Yes, I used it before she died, when I knew she had cancer, I reconciled with her.

**Interviewer:** Okay...

**Respondent:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently in a new relationship?

**Respondent:** Yes, I am also married.

**Interviewer:** Okay and um was this new relationship um a help for you? So was it already supportive for you at the time? Or now in retrospect? So that you perceived it as support?

**Proband:** Yes

**Interviewer:** Yes, and there is also this categorisation as to whether it is the highest level of support. Level was....

**Proband:** highest.

### Minute 47

**Interviewer:** Highest okay very nice. Um, how stressful was the separation for you? Very much onerous. -

**Proband:** I would take the worst.

**Interviewer:** So the highest stress level.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um here's why but probably-

**Respondent:** Why? Yes, because um because the separation was very stressful, because I realised very quickly that the issue of the separation would have a complete impact on the children, so that became apparent very quickly and at the time I felt completely responsible for it and was in the middle of depression.

**Interviewer:** Yes, okay. So not really able to react to it.

**Proband:** No, I was just working.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Okay. How stressful do you think the separation was for your children?

**Proband:** Highly stressful.

**Interviewer:** So also the highest level. Because the children have realised this so strongly -

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Or how do you assess the reasons? Yes, because they were probably totally caught between two stools.

**Test person:** Yes, exactly. So I feel that way, they probably feel that way, but I think it was extremely stressful for the children.

**Interviewer:** It's only about your assessment.

**Test person:** Mhm, yes, all right. I find it all extremely stressful.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what do you think were the motives of your partner at the time to arrange this?

**Proband:** Financial reasons -

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Proband:** Financial and jealousy.

**Interviewer:** Jealous of you or of a new partner?

**Respondent:** To me in terms of finances and to the new partner, because I think she was afraid that she would take her place.

**Interviewer:** Mhm Okay.

**Respondent:** And she did everything she could to prevent the children from having a relationship with her [new partner].

**Interviewer:** Okay, um. That's not a question from the questionnaire. How do you assess that, how did your wife at the time do it? So did she push or threaten the children or was it more mental blackmail?

**Test subject:** Well, she tried to sabotage the times we had together with the children as much as possible. She spoke badly about me and of course also about my new wife, my partner at the time, later my new wife. She did things like umm trying to influence the children about umm without going too far umm I know, not subtle things like, child you don't have to umm, it's up to you whether dad goes on holiday with you alone. His new partner doesn't have to come along, I trust you to sort it out, um I love you very much.

**Interviewer:** Mhm Okay.

## Minute 52

**Test person:** Well, something like that, it turned out that suddenly there was a new boyfriend. I was allowed to, well, it was my wish that I didn't introduce my partner so quickly, but she herself introduced her partner after two weeks, so to speak, and then also introduced the child when she told me and said: "That's not true, my boyfriend, that's not my boyfriend at all." So it was really weird things like that with the children, which made them not dare to just take her to their hearts.

**Interviewer:** Mhm yes.

**Respondent:** There was also a conflict, there was also an argument in which it became violent and, um, and then she sort of told the children the details of the argument.

**Interviewer:** That's what you said at the beginning, that um-

**Respondent:** No, um, that was a different situation, that was a long time ago. But that was the situation that was between... Um, that was between my ex-wife and my new wife. Partner... it escalated.

**Interviewer:** Ah, there was fisticuffs. Mhm.

**Test person:** She was just too involved with the children.

**Interviewer:** Ah okay.

**Test person:** They realised that, but she got them fully involved and that's how she ... the relationship changed drastically.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Understandable.

**Proband:** Something like that. I could give you many more examples.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, how old were your children at the time of the separation?

**Respondent:** So, um, yes, we're not talking about the official divorce, but about the divorce itself. when we told you we were splitting up, yeah?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Um okay yes that was 2000 and hm I have to think about that for a moment. 2017

Erm Joa good question ne. How old were my children? 2017, erm the two older children over 10, and the youngest under 10.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, did you receive support in any way? On the one hand, you said that your new partner was a support. Erm did you receive support from anyone else?

**Test person:** What do you mean by support?

**Interviewer:** someone who was there for you, who supported you during this time, who listened to you.

**Proband:** Yes, erm erm I was in psychological treatment. Erm my stepmother and my father listened to me, so my siblings, yes, so I had family support and my friends supported me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, very good. Are you still in contact with your former ex-wife?

**Proband:** Only via email and only what is necessary. Otherwise we don't talk to each other any more.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, okay Um, how stressful was the alienation for you. We have these classifications again, very low stress level, below average, slightly below average, average stress level, slightly above average stress level, above average stress group or highest stress level.

**Respondent:** Um, the alienation I experienced with my children?

**Interviewer:** Exactly.

**Test person:** Something between the highest and the one below, take the one below. That really put a strain on me.

**Interviewer:** The above-average stress level.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** To be honest, I find the question as to why a bit superfluous, as a mother I can totally understand that, but would you still explain why it is so extreme as part of the study?

**Test person:** Because it made me feel exposed and helpless. And um the pain that arises when you realise that someone you love suddenly turns away and you don't know why, it's almost unbearable, it's incredibly painful when you can't reach the person for a moment. It's incredibly stressful because you feel completely helpless, or I felt completely helpless. Powerless.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and how do you rate the stress for the children? So how stressful did the children perceive it to be from their point of view? I can read them the levels again, i.e. very low stress level, below average stress level, slightly below average stress level, average, slightly above average stress level, above average stress level or highest stress level.

**Test person:** Above-average stress level and I can't generalise that for everyone. They all experienced it differently. You would actually have to differentiate between the children, but the study doesn't specify that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. But on average, all three children have it-

**Test person:** No, no, much more so-

**Interviewer:** Yes, your children on average noticed it more than average.

**Proband:** Oh, yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Nevertheless, every child has their own gradation of course, but-

**Respondent:** Yes, exactly - Mhm.

**Interviewer:** But all above average on the whole.

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Again, why do you think that was the case? What do you think or why was it so bad for your children?

**Test person:** Because you, because it changed the image of me as a father, because they no longer knew who I was. That's what they said, I don't know who you are.

**Interviewer:** Yes, but it's really great that the children were able to communicate that.

**Test person:** Yes, that's right, we talked about it a lot

**Interviewer:** Mhm, the next question is a bit strangely difficult. As an adult, have you experienced an alienation process with your own children?

**Proband:** Again, please?

**Interviewer:** Whether you as an adult have experienced a process of alienation with your own children, i.e. whether there was another process of alienation not only with them, but also with others. Whether your children have experienced this with other people?

**Test person:** I can't do anything with that question. So I, I know what is meant by that, but I. I wouldn't know now.

## Farewell

### Minute 59

#### 3. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV03 1.

##### Greeting

**Interviewer:** Then we'll start straight away. How old are you?

**Proband:** Over 50.

**Interviewer:** OK and which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, woman, diverse?

**Proband:** Man.

**Interviewer:** Okay. You grew up in Germany. Do you have a migration background?

**Test person:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** Um, now it's a bit about your parental home. How would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parents' home in terms of education, income at work? Very low status, below average status, slightly. Average status, average status, slightly above average status, above average status or highest status?

**Proband:** Highest status.

**Interviewer:** OK and the same for your own socio-economic status. How do you rate that?

**Proband:** The same.

**Interviewer:** OK. What is your highest qualification to date?

No school-leaving certificate, lower secondary school leaving certificate, intermediate secondary school leaving certificate, A-levels, bachelor's degree or university of applied sciences, master's degree, diploma or doctorate.

**Proband:** University of Applied Sciences.

**Interviewer:** University of Applied Sciences, OK. Do you have siblings or half-siblings?

**Proband:** one sibling.

**Interviewer:** A sibling and how old?

**Proband:** over 50.

[...]

**Interviewer:** OK. Did your parents stay together until you reached the age of majority?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yes, OK, then it continues with: how was the relationship with your mother? Extremely bad, very bad, bad, medium good, very good or even excellent.

**Proband:** Excellent.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe that, so can you describe in more detail what was so great about it, or why they got on so well?

**Interviewer:** Yes, she was always there for us, for us children, and because of that, she put her career on hold and was always there for us. Was always at home when we came home. Back then from school.

**Interviewer:** Hm, very nice. And the same for your father. How do you rate the relationship?

**Proband:** Also excellent.

**Interviewer:** Also excellent.

**Respondent:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Interviewer:** OK, as a result of your experiences at home, how well equipped or prepared did you feel for adult life? Extremely poorly, very well.

**Proband:** Very good.

**Interviewer:** Well, I also have excellent here. OK again.

### Minute 5

**Test person:** Yes, then excellent.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. How are you currently feeling mentally, health-wise? Extremely bad, very bad, bad, average, good, very good or excellent.

**Proband:** Good.

**Interviewer:** OK and the same physically, so physically. How do I assess that?

**Proband:** Also good.

**Interviewer:** Also good, have you ever received psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Proband:** In Psychological yes.

**Interviewer:** What was the diagnosis?

**Proband:** There was no diagnosis, it was just to deal with the separate relationship with the mother of my children.

**Interviewer:** Yes, OK and how long were you in therapy or Mhm.

**Test person:** Yes, one year.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any physical complaints?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Then the omission. How much attention did you receive overall as a child?

**Respondent:** Is there also such a thing as a post-test?

**Interviewer:** Exactly the same again: highest allocation level, above-average Allocation level, slightly above average Allocation level, average.

**Proband:** Above average.

**Interviewer:** OK, how strong is your current bond with your carer?

**Test person:** Which reference person do you mean?

**Interviewer:** Depending on which person they had a stronger relationship with, mother and father.

**Proband:** Oh, so it's still the parents, is it? Strongly to both.

**Interviewer:** Very strong, i.e. highest level or above average.

**Test person:** Yes, no, the highest.

**Interviewer:** Highest OK, very good. As a child, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices and lawyers or similar.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** So, now it's about your own family, where there were probably also conflicts. That was the reason why you came to this study. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own biological family? Very low conflict situations, below-average conflict situations, slightly below-average average, slightly above-average, above-average or highest conflict situation.

**Respondent:** Highest conflict situation.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. And did you or the other parent involve the children in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** Yes,

**Interviewer:** Yes, OK. And how much do you think, practically not? Well, that happened rather unconsciously. Little, medium, strong, very strong or extreme.

**Proband:** That depends on who did it. No well. I would say strong.

**Interviewer:** How cold is it? You can also differentiate it, once for yourself and once for the other parent.

**Test person:** Well, for me I would say medium. And the highest level for the other parent.

**Interviewer:** OK. And in what form can you describe that?

**Proband:** Yes, in my case the mother has demonstrably alienated my children from me for 6 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** And manipulated them, so to speak, and put them under pressure.

**Interviewer:** Also by making a false statement, right?

**Respondent:** Definitely yes, yes, mum.

**Interviewer:** OK, so they have broken off contact with you, or or Mhm.

**Proband:** Exactly, exactly. The children have been refusing for several years.

**Interviewer:** OK. How much conflict protection did your children receive? There was also someone from another organisation who protected the children from having any kind of support. And if so, the highest level of conflict protection, above average...

**Proband:** I would start at the bottom, yes.

**Interviewer:** We have below-average or very low conflict protection.

**Proband:** Very low, I would say.

**Minute 10**

**Interviewer:** OK, then let's take the last level and how much attention did your children receive overall, so how would you rate that? Highest level of affection, above average.

**Respondent:** And from whom now? From whom? The grant from the authorities or what?

**Interviewer:** Unfortunately, that's not so clearly defined here. I would now actually refer it to the parents. How they were protected, i.e. how much attention they received, you can also differentiate between yourself and the child's mother.

**Test person:** Yes, she has to leave me out of it because I haven't seen my children for 6 years. Then I can only speak for the mother, she must have the children very, very high. Yes, what did you say? Affection, right?

**Interviewer:** Highest allocation level then.

**Respondent:** I would say so. Yes, mum.

**Interviewer:** Erm. Do you know what kind of bond your children currently have with their mother? Is it a very close bond?

**Proband:** No idea.

**Interviewer:** No, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers or similar in the case of the separation?

**Proband:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK and in what form?

**Respondent:** In the form of over 10 court hearings, mhm. And the resulting visits from legal counsellors, lawyers, youth welfare office, yes....

**Interviewer:** Have you received this help from -

**Proband:** ...psychologists.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so a lot has already happened. And were the contacts then more with you or the psychologists also for your children, or.

**Proband:** Yes, for everyone in principle, yes.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK, did you find that helpful?

**Proband:** In the beginning, yes. How it was then dealt with, no.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, so it could, could, they couldn't intervene helpfully or did they make the whole situation worse?

**Proband:** Aggravated.

**Interviewer:** In what way? You can also give examples if that helps.

**Proband:** Yes, as I said, there are 2 forensic psychological reports, both of which proved years ago that. That the mother alienates the children, transfers her fear to the children, puts them under pressure and that this is known to all the authorities involved and also to the courts. And yet it played no role in the subsequent decisions.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK.

**Proband:** Well, I wasn't able to get back contact or custody, which we both had.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how old are your children?

**Test person:** So now they're over 10. Yes, that started over 5 years ago, so yes, under 10.

**Interviewer:** OK, and did you still have contact with the children at the beginning?

**Test person:** Yes, yes, yes, very, very good and even.

**Interviewer:** In your opinion, what caused the situation to change?

**Proband:** Through a new relationship of the child's mother. Who then got divorced again after a few years. Yes, the children were simply brought into a conflict of loyalty, again and again with the start of the new relationships at the time.

**Interviewer:** OK. And that's when it started that you shouldn't see the children any more or that the children.

**Test person:** Yes, that's how slowly it started. Exactly, that's how slowly it started. That's when you realised that the children, that something had happened.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and and. No, do you think it came more from the partner or from?

**Test person:** No, no, o. No, I actually still had very, very good contact with him. We even went to mediation together and that was really, really great. It was all good at the time. Yes, and then the new marriage ended there too and then it was more or less over. Mmm. After a holiday I had with my child, it was more or less over the next day. His mobile phone was blocked. And yes, then I couldn't contact him any more.

## Minute 15

**Interviewer:** Mhm, what, what do you think were the motives of your former partners, the child's mother?

**Proband:** Oh, I think that's also due to her past, her childhood. Then it's certainly power with her. I would say the main drive and her own dissatisfaction. And also psychologically, a psychological illness, because I believe that people like that, who manipulate children, that's a clinical picture for me. And in that respect, there's something psychologically wrong.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Has your or the child's mother ever undergone any form of therapy or anything?

**Test person:** No, she always refused. And because everything is fine in her eyes.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** No, okay. How stressful was the separation for you? So also categorised in this, these stress levels are the highest stress level.

**Proband:** Highest level.

**Interviewer:** OK, and how do you assess that for your children? Can you say that?

**Proband:** I think so too, the highest.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the highest level of overload because the children felt that they were being manipulated, or?

**Proband:** I don't think so. But they always had a good relationship with me and we had wonderful years and, and they also have grandparents and cousins. And I remember all the things, some of which they haven't even seen yet. Mhm, so they always had a good relationship with me. We always travelled a lot and the children liked it with me and. So I guess they did. Especially for my one child. The bond was certainly a bit better than with my other child. I think so. That child found it extremely difficult, but as I said, he was put under pressure and. I don't know what methods. Mhm, but that's definitely what happened with the child.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Do you still see opportunities or are there still processes running? That they will re-establish contact.

**Proband:** No, well, I'm still waiting for a final judgement from the Higher Regional Court, I've already been there twice, because the last time, I went to the public on a massive scale. He was able to set a lot of things in motion. I also published a book. Was in the Bundestag, was on TV. Big picture articles, Abendblatt. So I talk about the subject. And then the judge, a local court, interpreted it that way. I had dragged my children into the public eye and because of that I lost custody.

**Interviewer:** Mhm okay.

**Respondent:** That was the reason. And now I went back to the OLG. And there I was actually waiting for the judgement as to whether I would get custody back, although that doesn't bring me any closer to my children, because I don't have contact with them, because they don't want it. So I have to wait until the children are at an age where I can contact them or where they might contact me so that they might see the whole thing differently.

## Minute 19

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did you receive support from anyone, i.e. anyone who encouraged you? In their path.

**Respondent:** Yes, I've also set up various groups where affected mothers, fathers and grandparents have met. The whole thing has now expanded very, very far - there are already several hundred people in these groups, subgroups, whatever. I organised this in the beginning, but have now withdrawn from it to some extent. In principle, I now only do things via the press when the press approaches me, the politicians. Then I talk about the topic, but I put my story on the back burner and talk about the whole issue.

**Interviewer:** Mhm okay.

**Proband:** To open the eyes of others or the public. That this. Happens thousands of times every year in Germany.

**Interviewer:** OK. Just a personal interest. What is the name of your book or can it be found under your name?

**Respondent:** No, you can, if you search: „ letters for my children." Then you can order it anywhere. [...] the proceeds go to the Arche, the children's and youth aid organisation. It costs €19 and is a collection of letters that were not only written by me to my children, but that there are letters from me to the lawyers, to the courts, to the youth welfare office, letters from friends of mine, to my mother, to the mother of my children, letters from my parents to the mother of my children, but which were not physically sent.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Proband:** But everything was written very, very sweetly, so nothing, no bad blood. I even thanked the children's mother on the last page for these two wonderful, adorable children, but that was my undoing.

**Interviewer:** In what way? Because the court interpreted it that way?

**Test person:** Exactly, exactly. Yes, yes, but it did a lot, because this book made the whole issue public [...] And then there was a whole avalanche of reports almost every week, whether it was Bild, Abendblatt, then these relevant films were repeated on ARD, du gehörst zu mir et cetera. Then I was invited to the Bundestag to talk about this topic and so on. They were very, very positive. I developed other things from it and that's what it was ultimately about for me. Because I said to myself, if I can't reach my children now, then at least I want to help others. And yes, to publicise the issue.

But as I said, I've now withdrawn from these groups a bit because I don't want to sound arrogant, but I've found my own way. Mhm, I'm focussing on my life again now. Yes, because I only have... I still have my parents and my siblings, my friends and so on. Thinking about it, it really got me down, because of course there are other stories that are a thousand times bigger than mine.

Mhm, yes, in the end it doesn't help the children either, because I do believe that the children will come at some point, or that a bond will form again. And you just have to be prepared for that, you can't just feel so lost and it took me years, but I'm now always at this point where I'm living my life and possibly now with someone else from Hamburg who has now taken over the organisation of these meetings for me. We're also talking to a foundation lawyer about possibly setting up a foundation, who is going to give us a bit of information about this topic from a psychological, scientific and legal point of view.

**Interviewer:** Did the work still help you?

**Proband:** Yes, of course, definitely very much. Yes, and I haven't regretted publishing the book yet, but I would, I would do it again tomorrow morning.

**Interviewer:** Okay. To come back to the interview. How do you rate that? How stressful was the alienation for you? So level-based very low, highest level and for.

**Proband:** Highest level.

**Interviewer:** And you can do the same for your children?

**Respondent:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** Are you unable to judge?

**Test person:** I don't know. Nope.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Yes, then we're so far through with the interview.

**Farewell**

**Minute 25**

#### **4. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV07**

##### **2.**

**Greeting**

**Interviewer:** OK, let's start off very gently in general terms. Do you have any questions in advance, anything that you are not quite sure about or that you would like to clarify beforehand?

**Test subject:** Knock yourself out. No, no. No, not at all.

**Interviewer:** No, everything is fine. OK, then the first question is, how old are you?

**Test person:** I am now over 50.

**Interviewer:** OK and which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, Woman, Diverse

**Proband:** Man definitely man.

**Interviewer:** OK. You grew up in Germany, but do you have a migrant background?



**Test person:** Yes, I was born here.

**Interviewer:** Ah OK. How would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parents' home in terms of education, income and occupation? A very low status. Below average status. Slightly below average status, average status, slightly above average status. Above average status or highest status?

**Proband:** Slightly above average status.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK and the same for their own socio-economic status.

**Proband:** One step above.

**Interviewer:** OK, so above average status. Mhm, what is your highest qualification to date? No school-leaving certificate.

### Minute 5

**Respondent:** Are you asking what?

**Interviewer:** Secondary school leaving certificate, secondary school leaving certificate, A-levels, bachelor's degree or university of applied sciences, Master's degree or diploma or doctorate.

**Proband:** Secondary school leaving certificate.

**Interviewer:** Ok, do you have siblings or half-siblings? At what age?

**Proband:** A sibling of the same age. And an older sibling.

**Interviewer:** OK. Your parents lived together until you were of age. Then that's cancelled. That too... how was your relationship with your mother? Then it is categorised as extremely bad, very bad, bad, medium good, very good or excellent.

**Test person:** Difficult, so actually very good. Our mum is just very introverted, which is why this "very good" was sometimes... I'll say it casually from time to time. But to put it simply, very good.

**Interviewer:** And your father?

**Proband:** Until his death a few years ago, fine.

**Interviewer:** Ah OK. Through the experience in your parental home. How did you feel emotionally there, in other words, how equipped or prepared did you feel emotionally for adult life? Extremely poor, very poor, poor, average, good, very good or excellent.

**Proband:** Very good.

**Interviewer:** OK, so nice. How mentally healthy do you feel? Is the categorisation also extremely bad, very bad, bad, average, good, very good or excellent?

**Test person:** I would categorise myself as a medium. Mhm, so psychologically, medium. If that's enough of a statement, then yes.

**Interviewer:** OK and mentally, how do you rate yourself? Yourself there.

**Test person:** Wait, that was just it, physically or mentally.

**Interviewer:** Psychologically, then. The first was psychological and now physical, so now physical.

**Test person:** Ah no, OK. Let's move on to physical: very good.

**Interviewer:** Very good, OK. Were or are you undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Proband:** No

**Interviewer:** So there are no severe physical complaints either.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Then let's talk about your parental home again. Were there any conflict situations there? So it's about the general categorisation of your parental home. Whether there were very low conflict situations or slightly below average and slightly below average. Average or slightly above average.

**Test person:** We were young at home. So it would be terrible if I were to say it was below average. I think it was really average, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, so it's as wild as ever, but everything is within reason. Quite normal.

**Proband:** Mentally yes, physically never.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did your parents have any conflicts involving you or was it a very harmonious relationship?

**Proband:** Very harmonious.

### Minute 10

**Interviewer:** Ok...how much attention did you receive overall as a child? Would you say the highest level of affection, above average, slightly above average, slightly below average, below average or a

very low level of affection?

**Test person:** Yes, let's come back to the nature of my mum. On balance, I would then actually say average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, did you have more affection from your father or, or from your father? If you differentiate between the two, yes. Yes, how would you rate that with your father? Just on average, OK. And how strong is your current connection to your carer? Unfortunately, the father has already passed away.

**Proband:** The mother is of course, is now also corona-related, of course a lot has changed there, but the relationship is. Whether is exaggerated. We children can certainly always do more, but we also have our family, our commitment, so it's above average.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any dealings with family courts, youth welfare offices or lawyers as a child?

**Test person:** Never.

**Interviewer:** Well, now it's about your own family.

**Proband:** The current one or the one we're sitting here for?

**Interviewer:** How would you describe your own family. The one you started. So now it's about the situation of one.

**Proband:** Yes, that's the one. That's the question I have now. I have a family now, an absolutely intact family, and that's the reason why I'm taking part in the study. It's just that I started a family beforehand, which unfortunately isn't intact because of that.

**Interviewer:** Then I would actually rely on the, to put it bluntly, the previous family. I think anything else would distort the result.

**Test person:** Exactly, exactly, OK.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So how would you categorise the conflict situation in this family? Was it a very low conflict situation, a below average conflict situation, slightly below average, average, slightly above average, above average conflict situation or the highest conflict situation?

**Proband:** An above-average conflict situation.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did you or the other parent involve the children in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** The other one.

**Interviewer:** The other OK and in what form?

**Proband:** Definitely in the form of clinginess during the relationship. Definitely in the form of jealousy. And after the relationship, definitely in the form of manipulation and instrumentalisation.

**Interviewer:** So you simply gave the children the wrong information about you?

**Respondent:** Gave out false information. The child was actually forced to make statements. The child was coerced into making statements, which the child would never have said with absolute certainty, never, because these are experiences that the child has not had, but the child made statements anyway. Which in principle. Yes, it also confirms or suggests that the child was in a conflict situation or was manipulated accordingly.

**Interviewer:** So OK, I think that will come later. Now for my understanding it concerns in inverted commas "only" one child or because he has several children that it concerns?

**Proband:** In that case: No, just one child.

**Interviewer:** So you only had one child with this partner.

**Proband:** Right, with perfect.

**Interviewer:** Not just OK. Mhm, OK, yes, sometimes the children are treated differently and maybe there is only a conflict with one child. That's why I'm just asking for myself. How much conflict protection has this child experienced overall, i.e. from any side? In other words, received support. So highest conflict protection, above average conflict protection, slightly above average conflict protection, average conflict protection, slightly below average, below average or very low.

### Minute 15

**Respondent:** To what extent is there conflict protection from outside?

**Interviewer:** Exactly. Whether the child had someone who was basically a refuge, someone who supported him or her. At that time, there was someone or not at all.

**Test person:** No, so then definitely. Mhm, there is below average or very low. Something different. Of course, the other parent has always tried to protect the child. That's why I would say below average Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How much attention did the child receive overall? Highest level of attention, above average level of attention, slightly above average, above average...

**Proband:** About the criticism I was once shortcut.... above average, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. What do you think? How strong is your child's current bond with their carer or what kind of bond does the child currently have?

**Proband:** It's difficult for me to say, but OK. I haven't had any contact with the child for many years, but of course I can speak from experience. We're only talking about the main carer now, aren't we?

**Interviewer:** Mhm, exactly.

**Respondent:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** OK, as a father, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, so did it all go through the courts, all these processes, the separation processes?

**Proband:** First of all, but then inevitably yes.

**Interviewer:** Well, the separation initially took place without support and then the family court or youth welfare office were called in.

**Proband:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Proband:** At some point I had no choice but to take the institution on board.

**Interviewer:** Did you find the support you received helpful?

**Proband:** Lowest level! No.

**Interviewer:** Then you can describe it?

**Proband:** Of course I can describe it, but of course that's very, very, very, very, very far. It's been going on for us since the separation over 10 years ago and the last contact between the child and me was many years ago. I'll just give you an example.

If you go to the youth welfare office and ask the youth welfare office for information, ask for advice, as a parent, as a concerned parent, and then you give your, as in my case, a difficult surname and you realise that this surname, surname is known to this youth welfare office employee. The youth welfare office employee also notices it again and she speaks to me about it and says, OK, your wife, we were still married at the time, has already been here and sought advice, where she has the same right as I do, and I can say that I also say the same thing and am then told that I shouldn't have told you that for data protection reasons, all good.

As I said, just as I have the right, the mother of the child also has the right and I am called by the mother of the child a quarter of an hour later after I leave the youth welfare office building and am asked, why did you go to the youth welfare office? Then of course that signals to you, what is happening here?

### Minute 19

**Interviewer:** I can understand that. Absolutely.

**Respondent:** And in this example, and this is just one example, I personally feel disappointed by the youth welfare office across the board, and it's not about me at all, across the board... Because ultimately it's never about helping me as a father, about any rights I have, but simply about looking after the child as a youth welfare office. What is happening to the child right now and this trust has been taken away from me, that this has ever happened over the years.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I can totally understand that. Were you able to intervene in any way or were they all negative?

**Proband:** Completely negative.

**Interviewer:** I'm sorry. Do you think that it is also because you have no contact with the child, or do you think that the youth welfare office could have done something to prevent this situation from arising?

**Proband:** Definitely, I think that the youth welfare offices in general, in this case the youth welfare office, generally have more options than to keep saying "our hands are tied", that's wrong. The youth welfare offices' hands are not tied. Especially when it comes to the welfare of the child.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how old was your child then?

**Respondent:** Yes, when I separated, under 5, and the last time I saw my child, almost 5.

**Interviewer:** Did the youth welfare office ever try to involve the child? Sure, the child was very, very young, but it could have been involved in the process in a child-friendly way.

**Proband:** Well, that applies to rights, I always see, I always question whether a youth welfare office

case worker can really be child-orientated, one or the other certainly can. In that case, I praise that. I don't know whether the child was ever invited directly by the Youth Welfare Office, at least in those early years, or whether they visited the mother's household, I can't say.

But I know that the child then also had to confirm to a guardian ad litem, when she was over 5 years old, that the child had experienced domestic violence, among other things. And if a youth welfare office hears something like that, then perhaps one might insist from the point of view of child protection that a youth welfare office should of course listen carefully. But you can't understand it if you tell the youth welfare office, even if there is of course testimony against testimony, that this is not the case, if there is even an expert opinion afterwards, if this expert opinion confirms that the child's statements at the time were not causal to their own experiences or events. That a youth welfare office, even though it has been informed that the child has been moved to make these statements, has been manipulated, that the youth welfare office does not then perhaps pull the lever and say: "OK, then we have to make a decision in favour of the child. "

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Test person:** That's why I can say straight out and across the board that in the end... I feel let down by the youth welfare office. The bottom line is that I recognise that the youth welfare office has let the child down.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I understand. And it was definitely a false statement by the child. So there was never any domestic violence and were you ever questioned about it personally?

**Proband:** No, the judge also said at the time that it was ultimately a case of testimony against testimony and even if you as the father have used domestic violence, you naturally have a right to your child. I personally, thank you, my nature, for me, violence is in no way a solution and was ultimately the reason why I moved out, because in the end I suffered from domestic violence, mainly in verbal form and. And finally, unfortunately, also in a physical form. So that made me realise that this relationship no longer had a chance, which is why I was forced out.

**Interviewer:** So there was...

**Proband:** If you then.....and it's in principle, only in principle, a year and a half or about a year.... I then applied to the court for access rights in 2016, it went back and forth at first and the accusation of domestic violence had never been made until then, not even on my part. Yes, I think we men probably still deal with it a bit differently, which is certainly wrong. And then a year later. During the court case, a few days before the trial, I suddenly received a written accusation of domestic violence against me. Then fine, I'm the victim, but I still expect someone from outside to ask themselves the question, why is the accusation only coming now? Yes, for me the accusation would be a reason for separation. For me, the accusation or the offence was ultimately the reason for separation and then someone who thinks a bit straight, I always say... should ask themselves the question, why is the accusation only coming now?

## Minute 25

**Interviewer:** Yes, especially as she has the right of access. Would you like to be there too? I wanted to have that too. The child should have no contact with you, so it would have been appropriate on her part, i.e. from her partner's side, that this should have been done at an early stage...

**Test person:** Yes, of course.

**Interviewer:** You realise if something had really happened. Yes, OK. I have to have a look, I completely deviated from the questionnaire. Yes, sorry about that. No, that's all good. You can understand the people, the test subjects behind it much better. If you're simply a bit more involved and can learn more about them. Can learn more about it. To better understand the whole situation...  
Subjects: Yes, next to it there is a lively the short answers, certainly a bit more sense.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm. OK, is there anything that worked for you in the relationship, i.e. in your own relationship, is there anything where you say it worked well, even in the separation phase or not at all?

**Test person:** So in the separation phase. So definitely. No, except that we both agreed to the divorce. During the relationship up to the time our daughter was born, we naturally had moments that worked perfectly or where we worked as a team. Definitely.

**Interviewer:** You have already said that you are currently in a new, stable relationship. Would you consider the relationship to be supportive or encouraging, or do you see this relationship as supportive or encouraging? If yes. Highest level of support, above average level of support, slightly

above average level of support, average level of support, slightly below average level of support or below average?

**Proband:** Definitely. I wouldn't say the highest level of support, even if that's how I feel. Mhm, because I also know that my family problems from the previous relationship naturally also put a strain on my current wife. That's why I would choose the second-highest level. That was the above-average support, right? Yes, then I would recommend that.

**Interviewer:** OK. How stressful was the separation for you? Very low stress level, below average stress level, slightly below average stress level, average stress level, slightly above average stress level, above average stress level or highest stress level?

**Proband:** Highest load level.

**Interviewer:** Highest stress level, why do you think so?

**Respondent:** Are we talking about separation from the family or separation?

**Interviewer:** About the separation, including the estrangement from her daughter, exactly.

**Proband:** Yes, it was an absolute tourist...an absolute tourist. Like the bunch.

**Interviewer:** Would you explain that again? Why? Personally, I find the why very difficult, because you can of course explain it quite well, but.

**Test person:** No, I can explain it quite well, because actually. And this word actually says it all, we as parents actually have a certain task and I always compare it to thinking outside the box. So much is happening in this world outside the box, and as parents we prepare our children for what is to come at some point, and that is our task, and that is our light, but it is actually also a matter of the heart, otherwise we wouldn't be parents. And then I always tear it down. You mum, I dad, you Eve, I Adam and it's our light task towards our child. And if we still fail as a couple, then we are still parents. And I don't have this understanding that there are actually parents, like the child's mother in this case, who can no longer see that. This responsibility, this matter of the heart, this sense of duty, everything that being a parent means, that they no longer live all that. I don't understand it, I can't understand it.

### Minute 31

**Interviewer:** That they basically give up their role in order to "lead the way" against their partner or former partner.

**Testimonee:** I don't even think I should give up the role, because in principle, they are still parents, but they are living the role completely wrong. Yes, on the one hand it's our duty as parents to actually always keep everything away from our children, to protect our children from injuries, from problems and so on, and I don't think I'll ever be able to accuse my ex-wife of trying to protect our daughter. She's mum enough for that. But she does. Not yes, she may protect you from no idea when she wants to go through the red light that she holds her, but on the other hand she burdens her own child, her own flesh and blood, with so many things that the child can't even cope with.

**Interviewer:** Mhm yes, and there are also questions.

**Proband:** Thoughts, many fears, losses and so on. That's what a parent forms in their own child at that very moment. Even if, in this situation, because the child is sad, the parent can even take the child in their arms and comfort and perhaps even protect the child at that moment. Situations don't come from outside, but really from within, from the parent themselves. And I don't understand that. I just can't get that through my head.

**Interviewer:** I can understand that, yes. How do you assess that? How stressful the separation was for your daughter? This is also the same categorisation. Very low stress level, below average stress level, slightly below average stress level, average stress level, slightly above average stress level or above average stress level or even the highest stress level?

**Test person:** Yes, then unfortunately I have to take the highest stress level, because over the years I've also learnt certain information about trauma therapy and so on and so forth.

**Interviewer:** OK. So you still have a bit of access to life via other people, that ....

**Proband:** No, no, no, I actually only did that at....

**Interviewer:** No, no, these are just things that I simply learnt, but still from her daughter. Yes, but not about other people, but actually about when it went to court again.

**Interviewer:** Ah OK. Is there still contact via the family courts at the moment?

**Proband:** At the moment, yes, but it's actually about, yes, in the end it's a contact via the family court, because I've made an application for Section 1686 of the German Civil Code for information about the child's personal circumstances, health and so on. And that's still ongoing, in fact, we've now

filed the application almost a year ago. I suspect that a decision will be made soon.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Can I ask if your child is aware of that so far?

**Test person:** Unfortunately, yes. I say unfortunately because it's actually a matter between us parents. I have a right to information, the mother has a duty to provide information, there is a paragraph in the German Civil Code that makes very clear statements about this. But the fact is that the child is of course now over 12 years old and ultimately also has a say. I don't always know whether I approve of a child being consulted on a parental matter. In my own case, as I said, our child has already had to make statements in court or give false statements at the age of almost 5. Of course, I'm also aware of the direction in which the child's statements are going. And I don't know whether that serves to keep the child calm if it ends up being involved in parental matters again. And apropos... And possibly also being prepared for statements. And that's what always bothers me about a child like that. Can it be prepared for such appointments with the youth welfare office, guardian ad litem, with the court, with a therapist, with an expert? It has to endure these appointments. And nobody asks themselves, will the child be supported after these appointments?

**Interviewer:** Hm, yes.

**Proband:** What happens to the child during the preparation, during the appointments ...? And what happens afterwards, is the child left alone again? I also ask myself this question very, very often.

### Minute 38

**Interviewer:** Mhm, but that doesn't give them an initial mood either. Are you now afraid that your child will have to make statements that they will be forced to make? Or do you think that this can now go ahead without your child or will the application be renewed?

**Proband:** Let's put it this way, I had that fear. I also asked that this not be the case, because ultimately it is a matter between us as parents. I know, of course, because of this lengthy procedure, the application was made a year ago, a moment ago, I know because of this procedure that our child has been heard in the meantime and that it also has a very clear position.

**Interviewer:** OK, may I ask what your child's position is?

**Respondent:** You may. Our child absolutely does not want this stranger, i.e. me, to receive photos. Because our child doesn't want me to know what it looks like. I find it questionable. Because our child...

**Interviewer:** Hm like....

**Proband:** First of all, our child and her mother moved back to my birthplace a few years ago. The likelihood of us bumping into each other by chance now, especially with my mum, the grandma, is of course much greater than if her mum and our child had stayed in our former place of residence. Where we used to live together. Maybe that's also the reason for not wanting me to know what it looks like. Nevertheless, our child is already over 12 and at that age, of course, you already have internet portals like Instagram. And then I think it's very questionable if our child doesn't want her father or "this strange man" to see photos of her. Even presenting photos on the internet that the father sees regularly - and complete strangers - of course, that's not all.

**Interviewer:** Yes, does your child then have contact with her grandmother, i.e. her mother?

**Proband:** Yes, that's the funny thing. No, he has no contact at all with my family, no matter who from my family, and then I always ask myself the question, when I argue that I don't want the child's father to have contact with the child because he has committed domestic violence, then I ask myself, was there also domestic violence from the grandmother, from the grandfather, from the aunt, from the uncle, from all the cousins? Why is there no contact? Again, a question that no judge or youth welfare office employee asks.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Proband:** And there's no logic behind it.

**Interviewer:** Do you know, does the child's mother now believe, but since she has moved back to the neighbourhood, that she has to expect to see her regularly or that the three of them will meet up for shopping?

### Minute 43

**Respondent:** Of course I don't know the reasons why, why, why, of course her parents, i.e. the child's grandparents, live in the same place. In the previous place of residence, you moved in because you were always a stranger. You certainly didn't have the social contacts there that you do now with your

parents and family. That's the reason. But I don't think that the mother of the child feels comfortable because it's a small town with less than 100,000 inhabitants. My name and inevitably her child's name is of course also known in the town, yes. I don't know if she's done herself a favour with this, for example, if our child pursues a hobby or leisure activity, it's quite possible that she'll be approached along the lines of: "You're an XYZ, where did that name come from? Which of the 3 children do you have a connection with?"

**Interviewer:** OK, Mhm.

**Test subject:** And I can't imagine that it would have been considered. Nevertheless, there was of course a reason to do it.

**Interviewer:** What do you think were your ex-wife's motives for acting like that?

**Proband:** Just give it a good try. I was told about a year and a half after I moved out. And then I revealed that I was in a new relationship, I was told quite clearly but very unkindly, which I also consider to be part of this post-separation violence, to return to my wife and child. Yes, otherwise you would never see the child again. It has a lot to do with power, a lot to do with wounded pride, a lot to do with hatred, here with pathological behaviour, and a lot to do with low self-esteem, that all this together has basically flipped this switch. I'll tear you down now: "If you don't follow my lead, you'll see what you get out of it." Incidentally, a similar case has actually come up now that I'm saying it: "[Name of subject], be aware, if you take one step, I'll take two."

**Interviewer:** OK, so it's all unpleasant.

**Proband:** And as some. That says it all of course, that says a lot. Says a lot.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, that she already has a system behind it and....

**Test person:** Now my employer. They tried all sorts of things with me, now think about how, how, how controversial that actually is. On the one hand, as a mother, you expect that you are entitled to receive maintenance from the child's father and on the other hand, you try to get the child's father's employer to dismiss the child's father. That doesn't go together.

**Interviewer:** No, with which commands?

**Respondent:** There were very, very, very, very many attempts, some of them very, very many, that went against the law. To finish off the father of their own child.

**Interviewer:** OK. Next question, we basically already answered that a bit in the middle, how old the children were, how long the process took. I mean, it's still going on in principle.

**Proband:** Well, as I said. The child was under 3 when I moved out. Then I had irregular contact for another year, but never as a couple, only with the mother. And then in September 2014, contact was completely broken off after 10 minutes and never resumed. Yes, made possible.

**Interviewer:** Do you know what the decisive factor was? Why did that happen? So if it comes off like that, it's cancelled.

**Respondent:** Describe in short words. You met in your old place of residence, sat down somewhere here, then ordered something to drink. But the phone rang. I answered it, talked on the phone for 30 seconds and was then told: "You're interested in your phone more? Your child doesn't want any more? We're leaving." And then the mum got up, left the table and, as I said, it was a beautiful, sunny day. And our child left after her mum. Came back to the table four more times. Our child wanted to, but the mum just kept going step by step, calling out twice. And what else could the other child do but follow her? The mother just left the scene, yes.

#### Minute 48

**Interviewer:** Yes, the child is then dependent. It has to go along somehow.

**Respondent:** We were torn back and forth and, as I said, the child went to the table four times. It's clear to me that the child has actually signalled that I don't want to leave here.

**Interviewer:** Did you receive any kind of support during this time? Did you have an advocate or someone who supported you?

**Test person:** Sure, my current wife, who I basically met a year and a half later.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Proband:** Psychologically an absolute support. But otherwise? No, neither therapeutically nor legally or anything like that. Except now through. Because I know that I'm not alone, that we have many affected parents and correspondingly many affected children and that we support each other. Yes, we really support each other, offer a shoulder. If that's what you mean by support, then definitely. But otherwise, no.

**Interviewer:** OK. How stressful is this alienation for you? There are also these, these stages...

**Proband:** Yes, don't you need to categorise any more? Highest level!

**Interviewer:** Highest stress level OK.

**Proband:** Nevertheless, I have to say this and that's why I can always talk about it or explain it on the Internet. I am a switcher. That always sounds daft, but it's just the way it is. It's the father of this child that he hasn't seen for over 10 years now. And then on the other hand, I'm also a service provider in my job, a husband, a father, a family man. And then I just have to switch, many people can envy me. I'm glad that I can do it, in fact, that I simply take my 1-2 hours every day, and then I really enjoy travelling by car, where I'm just mentally with my child [the estranged one], in the matter in general. And then there's dad 2.0, family man, husband, who just has his normal everyday life like everyone else. And that's why I can say quite clearly. Yes, it's a massive burden, but I can deal with it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How do you rate your child's stress and strain? What do you think? How stressed is she in this situation?

**Proband:** Of course it's difficult to judge, but I know what that does to a child. As I said, when our child made a statement in court about a month and a half ago that she doesn't want this strange man to have pictures of her, then that devalues this strange man, and that devalues her own father, and accordingly she devalues 50% of herself, or denies 50% of herself. And that's why I'm convinced that it does a lot to our child. But I know that our child has already undergone trauma therapy. I can say with conviction that I am not or cannot be the reason for these therapies, at least not directly, through my words, actions or even my fatherly presence. And if I still know that it has undergone therapy, I assume... the situation that the child is not dealing with this situation.

### Minute 53

**Interviewer:** Mhm, do you attribute that more to the fact that you simply don't have any contact with them secretly? Or is it more this sitting between two stools? Or do you think it's more due to other influences from the child's mother... And have you....

**Test person:** I think it's a, I think it's a conglomerate of everything, in the end. I mean, the child is now under 16 years old, and puberty has also come along. That is certainly also playing a role at the moment, i.e. in the last two years or so. How the mother has dealt with the situation, which has of course also influenced the child over the years, plays a very serious role. You know, when I talk to child rights activists who actually speak in this area of sexualised violence, and when they say that children have reported a parent for sexualised violence and the matter goes to court, and this child, who is demonstrably the victim. runs up to the perpetrator in the courtroom and hugs him and is happy to see him. Then you can also imagine what it's like for a child who fortunately hasn't experienced sexualisation leading to violence. But it still experiences psychological violence, yes. And maybe that can be explained somewhere. That's why I'm convinced of it. Especially because I also know formerly alienated children. And they all say that we, I don't want to exaggerate, I wouldn't say every day, but they all say that we regularly thought about our, our other parent and we regularly missed our other parent. And then I can't imagine that our child is an exception. No.

**Interviewer:** I can understand that.

**Test person:** My child in particular looks like me. Let's be honest, she's under the same roof as her mum every day and they both look in the mirror every day. She will recognise why she looks the way she does. So you can't forget that.

**Interviewer:** That's right. Okay, so we've actually been through the interview questions for a long time. That was a lot of my own interest, because I find it very exciting. It's really exciting for me to hear from the other side, the affected side.

**Proband:** That just gives me goose bumps...

**Interviewer:** It really is. That there are other fathers who are really fighting for it. To have contact somehow. I think that's great.

**Test person:** No, we're not just parents, we're also grandparents, we're cousins. Let's take my current child. I think he asked me for the first time when he was 4 or 5 years old and then I tried to explain it together with my wife. And then at some point he said, I don't understand. ... But in the end. It's not just about this relationship, this father-child relationship in my case. I now know so many mothers who are affected, now even more mothers than fathers who are affected.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK.

**Proband:** This is only about my personal life. Or people I know. I know that there are still more



fathers. ... And if I go back to my ex-wife's family situation, for example, where I know that within her own family. Yes, where the family cohesion is much, much stronger. Yes. Have you had family members from your own family turn their backs on you because they've simply said in no uncertain terms: "We don't agree with your behaviour towards your ex-husband and inevitably towards your child and we can't cope with it." Then I think that makes a very, very big difference.

### Minute 59

**Interviewer:** About a person, yes, but that didn't influence your ex-wife's behaviour?

**Test person:** (shakes head) No, if you know my ex-wife, it's all black and white. That was already the case during our relationship, I actually believe that the origin of her, her actions and her being, actually lies in her relationship with her mother. But that is. You often find the causes in your own childhood. My ex-wife only knows what it's like to be elated or deeply saddened. And I often said to her during our relationship: "That's not possible. You have to find a middle ground." Or you have to find things in this situation that didn't exist for you. And maybe the climate isn't proven, of course, but maybe there's a certain narcissism behind it, but I never want to go that far, if you're dealing with parent-child alienation and you read about this topic in the media and educate yourself a bit, then you keep reading about narcissism. That is pathological, that is, sick. I think that's after, that's so obvious, because nobody would do a "truly loving parent", in inverted commas, to their child. And accordingly, there can only be some kind of pathological behaviour behind it, I can't explain that.

**Interviewer:** Oh, ultimately we just want things to go well at some point.

**Proband:** Yes, of course. The time until then, nobody can get you back. In principle, you can try, I have to admit, even as the father of my older child [the estranged one], I've become much more distant. Yes, when my little child comes home this evening, the very first thing he does is jump into my arms and is happy to see me and looks forward to telling me how the day was. And, and, and.... And if my older child were to come to my house today for whatever reason and even want to give me a hug, I would keep my distance because that does something to me too. Yes, even though it's my greatest desire. And I'm also ashamed of my little child. But even though my greatest desire is to finally be able to hold my big child in my arms again... [sentence breaks off]

**Interviewer:** Yes, but I can totally understand that. Well, I would actually like to leave that as a conclusion.

### Farewell

### Minute 65

## 5. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV09

### 3.

### Greeting

**Interviewer:** So yes, it's great that we're sitting here today and that you're taking part in the study, that really helps us as students. In any case. So thank you very, very much. Mhm, yes, if that's OK with you, I'll explain how it works and if you have any questions, just ask.

**Respondent:** Mhm, yes.

**Interviewer:** Exactly, so you had received the preliminary questionnaire from us. There were a lot of questions and we would simply go through it together and discuss everything in detail. And if there are any questions that are unclear or if you notice anything while reading through the questionnaire, then please let us know at any time. The very first thing I would have to ask you is whether you have ever come into contact with domestic violence? In other words, have you experienced it yourself or come into contact with it in any other way?

**Test person:** Well, it wasn't that often. Well, my girlfriend and later wife has perhaps been with me the whole time, we were together from 2007 with breaks until April 2022, so 15 years and. Maybe seven or eight times that she somehow got a rap. Although it has to be said that she had a serious heart operation on the one hand and on the other hand, she had a sibling who did martial arts in her free time and that taught her self-defence. And the first two times I was actually a bit more scared. [Describes the physical attacks] But after that it wasn't that I was really scared when she hit me. Well, it didn't happen that often and, as I said, it was only the first two or three times that I was really scared

afterwards. She did hit me, but it wasn't dangerous in any way. So it wasn't, well, it wasn't very often, let's say, like I said, I guess about seven or eight times in the 15 years.

#### **Minute 10**

**Interviewer:** Was it also recognised under criminal law, i.e. was it reported to the police?

**Respondent:** No, I never did. No, I didn't have any visible injuries and I was my girlfriend or later wife, so in that respect. It just hit me and as I said, at the very beginning, the first few times, I was scared because [describes physical attacks]. I was kind of scared then. But after that I was also afraid and as I said, that...

**Interviewer:** Yes, I can totally understand that fear, that you're caught up in a situation like that at first. I'm definitely sorry that you had to go through that experience. It's a job for you at first, I'll put it that way, and often I don't think it's that easy, yes, to be in a situation like that.

**Test person:** Well, it wasn't, as I said, it was never the case that you could say she didn't beat me up or anything like that. But as I said, she pushed me into a corner the first time and then tugged at me and, as I said, [describes physical attack]. And then later she hit me or kicked me in the face once, but that was all. [Describes situation with physical assault]. So as I said, it really wasn't too bad because of that. So it wasn't a bruise or anything like that or something broken, but things like that.

**Interviewer:** OK, yes, it's just important for us to know whether it was recognised under criminal law or not.

**Respondent:** Nobody did, I didn't report it and nothing. Nope.

**Interviewer:** OK, yes, but I don't think it's an easy situation. I would just start with the questions. The first question was how old you are.

**Respondent:** Under 50.

**Interviewer:** OK and which gender do you feel you belong to?

**Respondent:** I am male.

**Interviewer:** So OK, did you grow up in Germany?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, do you have a migration background?

**Respondent:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** OK. Exactly, so the next question would be, how would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parental home? That is a scale from 1, which is very low, to 7, which is the highest status.

**Respondent:** So that means socio-ecological. So does it mean income, wealth, education or what?

**Interviewer:** Education, income, occupation are our criteria in the study.

**Respondent:** I would say 5 out of 7.

**Interviewer:** OK, very good. And what is your own socio-economic status, again from 1 very low to 7 highest status.

**Respondent:** Yes, I have that for both of us, so I'll see you soon. Because she only works part-time, she earns very little. But as I said, we're now divorced. But we always shared the money, so she could take as much as she wanted. So we both have the same status in that sense.

**Interviewer:** And also with her parents, with you, with her parents, so to speak. What was that like?

**Test person:** Oh, with the parents, with the parents it's also comparable. Yes, yes, maybe, yes, maybe the parental home, if you look at the parental home, then I would say it's maybe 4 with both of us, but I would say it's roughly comparable. They didn't study, neither their parents nor my parents did, and we're the first generation to have studied, so we're a bit better off now.

#### **Minute 15**

**Interviewer:** OK, and if you studied, what degree did you get? **Respondent:** Diploma, university.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did your own parents stay together until you were of age?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did your grandparents stay together until they came of age or did they stay together until they were adults?

**Respondent:** Well, my one grandmother lived in our house. My maternal grandfather died in the war, so I never got to know him. On my father's side, they lived not far away and were married until they died. **Interviewer:** OK, yes. How is or was your relationship with your mother?

**Respondent:** Good.

**Interviewer:** Good, OK, so on a scale of 1 to 7 you would rate 1 as extremely bad and 7 as excellent.

**Respondent:** 6.

**Interviewer:** OK, why? If I may ask.

**Respondent:** Why not 7 or why 6 or what do you mean?

**Interviewer:** Exactly, so why is the ratio good? So what characterises the relationship, so to speak, that you see it so well?

**Respondent:** Well, at the end of the day, she's always looked after me. I'm also looking after her at the moment. And in that respect, but there are problems, my father died a few months ago and...

**Interviewer:** My heartfelt condolences.

**Interviewee:** In that respect, it's just for her, I moved here less than a year ago to be with my father and because I had to move out of my ex-wife's house. And in that respect, there are points where she [the subject's mother] is simply overwhelmed. She did things together with my father for 60 years almost every day and she didn't know some things and now she's become totally forgetful because of the death and she can't do a lot of things. She can't see very well either, so she's physically deteriorated and that's really hard for her. And there are already a few arguments, also because she has done certain things in a certain way that I don't do. And it's a bit of an adjustment for her now. She's lived alone with my father for the last few decades. In that respect, she's just used to it. In this respect, it's not excellent to say that everything is coordinated, but it's a difficult situation for me because she cries so much, even after my father's death, and she's used to certain things in a certain way that I'm not used to and then there are arguments, but generally she looks after me and I look after her.

**Interviewer:** Ok, that's good. How was your relationship with your father? Again on a scale from 1 to 7.

**Respondent:** Also 6, yes, that's just as good.

**Interviewer:** OK. And how emotionally equipped or prepared do you feel for adult life as a result of the experiences you had at home?

**Respondent:** I don't know very well. I just know that I was with my parents, they always had sunshine and I was never used to arguments and things like that. And other things that I was used to, including the attitude to money and my father always brought the money with him and for them it was never an issue, so I realised that he had different things or different approaches. Even with my wife, who I didn't know before and I just wasn't prepared for that.

**Interviewer:** OK, how would you rate it again on a scale of 1 to 7?

**Test person:** Maybe around 3.

**Interviewer:** OK, and how do you feel mentally healthy? So do you feel mentally healthy or not mentally healthy, if you have to rate it like that? We have these scale values from 1 to 7 again.

**Minute 20**

**Respondent:** Also more of a 3.

**Interviewer:** And physically?

**Respondent:** More like 5 or 6.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** OK, I'm a bit older, so you have to look at it in relation to your age. So I think I was fitter when I was 20 or 25. But in general, I think I'm healthy for my age.

**Interviewer:** Were you or are you undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** I once had psychological treatment because of the whole argument with my wife. I went there once, but he wasn't able to help me that much. But that was only for a short time and it must have been in 2016 or 17. So it wasn't too long, but as I said, he was supposed to, so it was my wife's idea to say, why don't you go there and be nicer to me, something like that. And I did that, but somehow it didn't help me that much.

**Interviewer:** Ok, did the therapist then make a diagnosis, explain something?

**Test person:** No, no, not in that form.

**Test person:** No, as I said, I also cancelled it. Somehow I got the impression that he was advising me to leave my wife, that it was going in that direction and I didn't want that and that's why I broke it off.

**Interviewer:** Yes, ok. How would you assess the conflict situation in your parents' home? You've already said that there were no arguments or anything like that in your parental home. What were the conflict situations like, were there any, were they resolved? **Test person:** Actually. Actually, it was always very harmonious and somehow my parents always came to the same conclusion. I think my father tended to give in a bit more often. But as I said, I never really noticed that they ever argued.

**Interviewer:** So again, you would rate the conflicts as very low.

**Test person:** Yes, yes. So not at all with us now.

**Interviewer:** Whether from 1 to 7 on a scale.

**Respondent:** So the lowest there is.

**Interviewer:** Did your parents involve you in parental conflicts?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Interviewer:** How much conflict protection did you have as a child, again from 1 to 7? You've already said that there weren't actually many conflicts, but if there were any, did you have any kind of conflict protection?

**Test person:** I don't know what we meant by that either, but we, I was with my parents and so I was, so nothing major and things actually went quite well with my parents. So I was a low-maintenance child, I think. I never made any great demands.

**Interviewer:** Exactly. I think the question is based on the fact that if something happened, whether you were also protected and not somehow involved in it yourself or afraid.

**Respondent:** Mhm, Mhm. No, no. Okay.

**Interviewer:** How much attention did you receive as a child? Again a scale from 1 to 7? 1 is the highest level and 7 is very low this time.

**Respondent:** First from the parents, right?

**Interviewer:** Well from them, so from the parents, how much affection they received or generally the grandparents, too.

**Respondent:** My parents both worked and that's why my grandmother looked after me during the day and all in all I think I got quite a lot. So I would say 2, but as I said, my parents weren't there all the time, I was with my grandmother or alone a lot.

**Interviewer:** How strong is your current bond with your carers? You have already said that you are very close to your mother and that your grandmother lived with you for a long time until she died. How is your current attachment to your attachment figures from 1 to 7? 1 here again the highest attachment level 7 again the lowest.

**Respondent:** Yes, very high, I have to look after my mother, so 2.

**Interviewer:** OK, oh.

**Respondent:** Well, I go to the doctor a few times a week, so to speak, to the shops. We do that together. I help her and she helps me in that respect. We live together in the same house, in the same flat, my old parents' house.

**Minute 25**

**Interviewer:** Ok. And then the contact is probably also very much there again with the reference person, so with her mother?

**Respondent:** Yes, yes, yes, since the few months that I've moved back here. As I said, before that I lived with my wife, my child, and now I moved back here a few months ago. I lived with my wife from 2017 to 2022 or no, now that it's the beginning of 2023, I didn't live here [with my parents] at all. I only communicated with my parents via Skype. And as I said, I've only been living here for a few months now.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you ever have any contact with the family court, youth welfare office or lawyer as a child?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** OK. And now the questions are about your own family, so to speak, with your child and with your wife, ex-wife, I suppose. That's where the questions come in a bit. How would you describe the conflict situation? 1 is very low here and 7 is the highest conflict situation. So how much conflict is there? Or was there also?

**Test person:** It's difficult to say. She pretty much avoided me. So it obviously wasn't a nice life together for her. We always postponed the conflicts, so to speak. In other words, if one wanted one thing and the other wanted something else, then either I gave in or the whole issue was postponed. Postponed again, postponed again, sometimes for years and never resolved. It was very full of conflict. So maybe 6 or so.

**Interviewer:** They did, didn't they....

**Respondent:** But not in the sense of arguing, but unresolved disagreements.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you or the other parent involve the children or your child in the conflicts? So

also in the unresolved conflicts, that they were somehow involved.

**Test person:** Well, not in the conflicts themselves. But my child did notice, for example, that we didn't live in the same house as my wife, my ex-wife has a house with 3 flats. We actually lived in 2 different flats almost all the time and so he noticed that because the child was with mum. If you look at the last 3 years that I lived there, the child always lived with mum in the flat. And I lived on the first floor. Grandma lived there for a long time, so I wasn't even allowed to go downstairs, which meant that I didn't see my wife at all from Monday to Friday, not every week, but relatively often, she didn't come to the door downstairs and sometimes didn't speak to me or only spoke to me briefly and then at the weekend we did things together for maybe 6.8 hours in total. And that's the question. That's not getting involved in the conflict. In other words, we didn't argue like that, but we just weren't together and the time we were together, we went shopping, we ate something, we played something, but of course the child still noticed that mum didn't want to be with dad and things like that. And she always told the child: "One is us, that's my child, you and your sibling and family, and the other is me and my parents. She always instilled this in the child, even when we were together. But as I said, in terms of arguing, we didn't argue so much openly, but we either said "OK then I'll just do it this way" or we just kept parking and parking and parking the issue and never made a decision. Then the question is what does it mean to get involved in a conflict? As I said, we didn't argue that much.

**Interviewer:** OK, I understand. How much conflict protection did your child have? So your child experienced it? Sure, it's just like that, especially if you weren't involved in the dispute, but were you always, shall I say consciously, kept away from disputes or these conflicts?

**Minute 30**

**Test person:** No, not at all. Not in the sense that, as I said, we didn't argue that much and my child realised it a bit. Even trivial things like that. Then my wife would sometimes involve the child in the issues. So I also had to lie for my wife.

**Interviewer:** So on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 would be the highest level of conflict protection and 7 would be very low. How would you rate that?

**Respondent:** 6.

**Interviewer:** How much attention did your children receive overall? 1 is the highest level and 7 is the lowest.

**Respondent:** Well, my wife always looked after the child really well and I just took care of him because he was in a different flat. I didn't do that much with the child, but when I did, I was always very affectionate towards the child, but in terms of time it was, I'll say, only a fraction of what my wife did. Although I have to say in retrospect, if I also, I saw this earlier, in the statistics, if he watched so much YouTube, for example, then you can't have looked after him like that during that time. So in that respect, I don't know, I say I didn't have that much time with the child. But when I did, I was always very focussed on the child and my wife had a lot more time with the child. But as I said, she also let the child do some things, which I personally don't think is good, because she was able to play on the tablet so much. So in that respect it's difficult for me to judge.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so how strong is your child's current bond with their carers?

**Respondent:** I've completely lost contact now. The child has just decided in favour of mum and says it doesn't want to see dad again and I can't assess how he's doing with my wife. There are just a few things that I say are harmful for the child, that's, let's say, a matter of opinion. Well, the child has always slept in his mum's room his whole life. As I said, I usually slept on the other floor and the two of them always slept together in a double bed.

**Interviewer:** As a father, did you have any contact with family-orientated youth welfare offices or lawyers or experts?

**Respondent:** Yes, I still do.

**Interviewer:** In what form?

**Respondent:** There have been several court cases now and one is still ongoing.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you find it helpful, supportive, friendly or rather unhelpful, rather harassing or cold, insensitive?

**Respondent:** So all the procedures didn't help at all.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Would you use them again or even recommend them to others?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** I'm not going to pay for any more reports, there's no point.

**Interviewer:** OK, would you have any advice on what actually worked or what could work?

**Respondent:** I think our legal system is completely unsuitable for keeping families together or maintaining the relationship with the parents. So if one parent is determined that they don't want the child to see the other parent and the child is with that parent. Then I don't think there's any real chance, unless, what do I know, that parent is being extremely stupid. I don't know, is constantly drunk, beats the child or something else, but if you don't behave completely stupidly, then you can do it and I think that's very harmful for the children.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Respondent:** No.

**Minute 35**

**Interviewer:** How stressful was the separation for you? 1 is the very lowest level and 7 the highest.

**Respondent:** A 7.

**Interviewer:** OK, may I ask why?

**Respondent:** Well, I love my child and it was always my main goal in life to have a child and that just happened overnight. It was actually even better within this marriage and the best 3 or 4 months before that. And then there was an argument and then she didn't want me anymore and I lost contact with my child from one day to the next, so that was, well, the worst moment. And as I said, that was always a goal in life for me as a child, a primary goal in life. I've always said that whether I have a career or not is not as important to me as having a child. **Interviewer:** How stressful do you think the separation is for your child? Or the separation between you and your wife in general? How stressful was it for him?

**Test person:** I can't judge that. So I don't know. OK, of course I also believe that it's very stressful, but I'm not in the middle of it. So he had to say some things that were obviously wrong, the child chewed his fingers in front of the judge and other things on the other side. My ex-wife still keeps me informed about the child and he still gets good grades at school, does sport, and so on. I believe that this has a long-term and massive influence on him, but as I said, I don't know, I can't judge it.

**Interviewer:** You also said that your relationship with your child was somewhat disrupted and cut off by your wife. What do you think your wife's motives were for this?

**Interviewee:** I think she was suffering from a mental illness. Okay. I already realised that during my time... well, my child originally spoke very badly. And then I had an acquaintance over for dinner and said I wanted to talk about my child, so she was a medical student at the time. But then she asked quite a lot about my wife and afterwards she said that she thought my wife had a serious mental problem. I also said at the time, 'Oh, that's not the case, but I've now heard it again from another doctor who I actually wanted to speak to about my child, i.e. a friend of a former school friend of mine. He also pointed out that it could be a mental disorder. And as I said, I had contact with the friend from back then, which I didn't know, but she has otherwise always worked in psychiatry and is now also a psychiatry specialist and she has also confirmed that she still believes that my wife has a severe mental disorder.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** Well, as I said, that's just a guess, I don't know. I happen to know, because there was a dud letter, that she was undergoing psychotherapeutic treatment for depression. This illness, which the acquaintance, the one I mentioned, was a trainee doctor at the time, the other is a registered doctor, actually wanted to talk to him about the child in general. They think it's something more serious, but as I said, you're not involved, you don't know.

**Interviewer:** You've just said, because the next question would be how this situation came about or what factors contributed to the alienation or separation. You've just said that you believe it was due to this illness. Were there any other factors that you say influenced it?

**Minute 40**

**Test person:** So I have to differentiate between what is the reason and what is the trigger. I think this illness, also in the direction of... Well, it's not as I said, if what they've just said is true, then paranoia is also involved. That is, as they say, certainly the reason that she, that I simply couldn't please her. And that's probably why she didn't want to see me and why the relationship was so bad the whole time. And the trigger was certainly the argument we had and the fact that she hit me again. But that was less of a problem, but she sent me away then too. She told me to go to my parents' house, which I did. A few days later she said, yes, yes, you'll be back soon and then she seems to have changed her mind. Anyway, she then sent my child ahead and said, she had him say: "Dad, I don't want you to

come to my First Communion tomorrow." And then I said: "All right." Then I spoke to my wife and said: "OK if it's [child's name]..." so she said at first. Yes, she couldn't help it, the child had decided that I shouldn't come and then I said: "If that's really the case and can't be changed, then I can just sit in the back row of the church and not come to the party. And I'll just spend the night in the flat as normal." And then she said: "No, absolutely not. You're not coming into my house, I'm not letting you in." So, you could see from that that she was obviously putting the child forward, otherwise she wouldn't have said beforehand, I can't help it if he doesn't want you to come, and then in the next sentence, I won't let you in under any circumstances, lock everything up. So, as I said, the trigger was this argument that we had, and I think the reason is mainly to be seen in the illness.

**Interviewer:** How old was your child? When it all happened? How long did the process take?

**Respondent:** The child was under 10.

**Interviewer:** Okay. What consequences did that have for you, for your child? What consequences did the whole conflict have for you, for your child and for the estranged parent, for the family, also for her parents, her mother, for example for her deceased father?

**Test person:** What do you mean, what consequences? I just haven't seen my child since then. So that means I haven't seen it from a distance and once there was an attempt to initiate contact and then it ran away and everything. But I haven't had any social contact with him in the sense of me. I could have talked to him or something. Since the year before last...

**Interviewer:** Have you received any support in that respect? With the consequences, so to speak, that something supportive came to you.

**Respondent:** Well, as I said, what the youth welfare office and the educational counselling did was completely useless. They are completely unprepared for a situation like this, where a parent wants to prevent contact. No, I found my own way of dealing with it.

**Interviewer:** Do you still have contact with your wife?

**Test person:** She calls me once a month. Most of the time, if I didn't follow up, the calls would be over within a minute or two. She just informs me, so she should just inform me in general. She usually says, you already know everything anyway, although you already know everything refers to the fact that she always emails me some grades from school in the meantime, i.e. the work from school. So she thinks I already know everything. And then I just ask. Were you on holiday? Where were you on holiday? Are you still doing sport? What are you interested in? And most of the time I don't get any sensible information, so in principle it doesn't help me at all.

**Minute 45**

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** But as I said, in Bavaria they call them rehearsals, in other countries they call them homework monitoring, homework review or exams or something. So in Bavaria they're called samples, my wife usually sends them to me if she doesn't forget.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, as I said, you don't have any contact with your child at the moment. Do you think a reunion with your child is in prospect or even possible?

**Interviewee:** Well, if my wife didn't reject me, it would be possible from one day to the next... Well, I'm sure of it, because it loves me and it has also said it loves my wife, my ex-wife. But my wife just doesn't want us to be together. And that's what the child does, out of love for her, I think. And if my ex-wife were to talk to me and say, [name of child], come here... Then everything would, I'll say, be fine within 5 minutes. But she doesn't do that. In that respect, I don't know whether it will emancipate itself at some point, or how it will continue, I have no idea.

**Interviewer:** We've already said...

**Respondent:** He just knows that he has to be considerate of his mum. And he also told me once that although he loves her so much, he's also afraid of his mum.

**Interviewer:** Okay, mate. You've already said that everything was very, very stressful for you. Understandable, too.

**Respondent:** Mhm, yes.

**Interviewer:** In which classes was this alienation? That's what we call it for you, that your child is no longer there, that you are alienated from your child, so to speak, from 1 to 7? 1 is very low 7 is of course the highest level.

**Respondent:** What is the question?

**Interviewer:** So how stressful was the alienation for you?

**Respondent:** Maximum level.

**Interviewer:** OK, the reason would probably be because, as you said, it was a life goal for you to have a child.

**Respondent:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, how stressful do you consider this alienation to be for your child? Again, level 1 is very low. Level 7 is then.

**Respondent:** I don't know. I can't assess that. I suppose because he chewed on his finger there too, but it's always a question of what's stressful, is it stressful that he has to lie, is it stressful that he may no longer be allowed to see his dad. Or whatever, I can't assess that. So I don't know, I can't say, but it's definitely because we actually had a really good relationship and he recorded a video shortly before the separation, so without the face, just a video of him commenting on games and telling me what he was planning to do with me and so on. In that respect, I don't know, I think it's a lot of stress and it's also a lot of stress, but the child hasn't had any failures in the sense that it's still got really good grades at school, although they're getting a bit worse now, but that may also be because my wife lets the child play on the tablet so much.

**Interviewer:** Have you also noticed a process of alienation in your child, i.e. that he or she has also become estranged from you, and at the same time a separation has come about, so to speak. But did you also notice that it was becoming estranged from you?

**Test person:** As I said, everything was fine until we separated and we still had lots of ideas about what my child wanted to do with me. And then? As I said, that phone call where she obviously sent the child ahead. So it wasn't a process, it was overnight that we no longer had a good relationship.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That was actually all the questions. Thank you very, very much for answering them all. It's not always easy to talk about a topic like this. Because, as you said, it's also very stressful for you. So thank you very much for taking part in the study and completing the questionnaire. Apart from that, I have no further questions. Do you have any further questions?

**Minute 50**

**Respondent:** No so far.

**Interviewer:** OK, thank you very much. It would be great if you could submit the data protection form.

**Respondent:** Exactly, I'll have to see if I can somehow print it out this evening or tomorrow and then scan it so that I can send it to you.

**Interviewer:** Perfect. Thank you very much in any case.

**Respondent:** Yes, with pleasure.

**Farewell**

## 6. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV10

**Greeting**

**Interviewer:** Perfect. Then I'll start with the first question. How old are you?

**Respondent:** Under 50.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, woman or diverse?

**Respondent:** 100% man.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did you grow up in Germany or do you have a migrant background?

**Respondent:** I was born in Germany.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How would you describe the socio-economic status of your parents' home? So that's the education, the income, the profession of your own parents.

**Respondent:** Centre, centre

**Interviewer:** From a scale of 1 to 7, but one is the lowest and seven is the highest.

**Respondent:** Five.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And what is your own socio-economic status?

**Respondent:** How? What was the question?

**Interviewer:** What is your own socio-economic status, i.e. occupation, education, income, again on a scale of 1 to 7? One is very low and seven is the highest status index.

**Respondent:** Four

**Interviewer:** What is your highest qualification to date? Zero is no qualification. One is Hauptschule, two is Realschule, Abitur, Bachelor, Master or Diplom or doctorate.



**Respondent:** Master's degree in this case.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you have any siblings? If so, how many.

**Respondent:** Together with me? We are four children in total.

**Interviewer:** Did your own parents stay together until they were of age?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Did your grandparents stay together?

**Respondent:** So married, do you think?

**Interviewer:** Exactly. Or none, or in a relationship, so to speak.

**Respondent:** Yes. Death divorced them.

**Interviewer:** Oh yes. But at least you were together then.

**Respondent:** That's what you want.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** Yes, but death is always a hard thing anyway. I think yes, unfortunately that's part of it.

**Minute 5**

**Interviewer:** Yes. How is or was your relationship with your mother? One is extremely bad and seven is excellent.

**Respondent:** So very good, the very best.

**Interviewer:** And why? If I may ask.

**Respondent:** Er, my mother was always there to support me, to back me up. She always mediated the bad things that happened with my father, always in a different way, so to speak. She was the one who always... She was the bridge between me and my father, always trying to please everyone. How a mum just reacts like that. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes

**Proband:** But the relationship with my father is also great. Perfect.

**Interviewer:** That would have been the next question. Why is your relationship with your father so good then? If I may ask.

**Test person:** Never mind. My father actually brought us all up like this, always telling us Do any shit in your life. Excuse me. But remember that. Er, don't do something where you lose face and I lose face because of you. By the way, I'm Turkish myself, I'm Muslim. I had girlfriends who spent the night with me. We were in a relationship. Partnership. Of course I did everything that was against our culture in terms of faith. I came home drunk. The only thing my father said to me when I woke up the next day with a hangover was: "I'll give you a tip: don't drink all over the place, but stick to a maximum of two things, then you won't get a headache!" he said.

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Test person:** So that was the upbringing. And that in our home country, as the only Turkish family in a small village with just under 3000 inhabitants. Simple yes...but it was nice.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Have you ever actually experienced domestic violence or somehow experienced it yourself in relation to domestic violence, which is also recognised under criminal law, i.e. where it was reported or something?

**Respondent:** (...) Er. Last year, violence cannot be attributed. Typical divorce. The typical complaint that every husband experiences.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And what is that, if I may ask?

**Respondent:** Excuse me?

**Interviewer:** What is that? If you don't mind me asking.

**Respondent:** Where the woman then suddenly claims that he's threatening me and all sorts of things. Where you first get away from your wife and are not allowed to see your children for a few months?

**Interviewer:** Okay. Was that then prosecuted or was it dropped?

**Minute 8**

**Respondent:** It was then stopped.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Because there was no evidence, but it didn't do me any good. The thing stopped me from seeing my children for a few months. Okay. The more inhumane. Unfortunately, Germany was God's country.

**Interviewer:** Hm. Gosh! Did you feel equipped and prepared for adult life by the experiences in your parental home, especially when it comes to the emotional side of things, to beating yourself

emotionally, so to speak?

**Test person:** Yes. Yes, it was clearly the typical arrangement in inverted commas. The man has a certain task. The woman has a certain task. But the way women are portrayed, especially by the Turks, it always seems to the outside world that the woman doesn't have a say. The man wears the trousers and everything. That's not true at all. Yes, that's how it looks on the outside, but with us it was the other way round. Of course, the man works and earns money. Yes, but my father had all the cash back then, back when it was still really like that with cards. My mum really managed all the money, so to speak. She always decided what to do and what not to do. And my father did the same as I do now in my marriage. Back then, my wife always said to me: "Can I give you more money?" Yes, I understand. So equality between men and women is the way we actually know it. That's actually how it automatically continued into marriage.

**Interviewer:** Yes. And how much would you say you prepared yourself emotionally, so to speak, for this adult life? You just felt prepared. You just said very, very well. But on a scale of 1 to 7, seven is excellent and one is extremely poor.

**Respondent:** I would almost say towards five.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Of course, you can't try to portray everything so perfectly, because society, you also have to adapt. Yes. Give, man, unfortunately give the woman too much credit. Then they say you're a wimp. If you take the lead yourself, then it's 'What kind of man are you? Your wife has no say at all. And it's a balancing act to really find a happy medium.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel mentally? So how do you feel mentally, health-wise? Extremely good or very bad? Again from a scale of 1 to 7, one.

**Respondent:** Two?

**Interviewer:** And how do you feel physically, in terms of your health?

**Respondent:** One. Two, 2 to 3, are okay.

**Interviewer:** Or have you ever been in psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** If so, why? And what was the diagnosis?

**Respondent:** Once in 2005, after my accident at work. That I had a disability, mental, physical, also with a lot of restrictions. That you're suddenly torn out of the middle of life at the age of 29. And no longer being allowed to pursue the job you had learnt. That was a blow, of course. But thank God that's over now. The damage is still there. But on the other hand, I have to say that right now, with the divorce and separation. Something always comes up. It's a tough burden when you're suddenly out on the street from one day to the next. Without a house, without a wife, without children. Everything is gone.

**Minute 12**

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** It's not easy. I'll be honest with you. And of course it takes a lot out of you. So much so that it also had an impact on my job. And my workplace. Mistake after mistake. Concentration problems. Emotionally charged. You don't see your children. The younger child had a birthday and I wasn't even allowed to come within 100 metres of the flat. You went past the school. You gave her her present. Hours later, the police came to the flat and threatened to report me because I had approached my child. I explained why. I'm banned from approaching the mother, but not the child. Yes, until everything has been clarified in court, they have to stay away from their children. It really is such a shitty law in Germany. Now you can't even imagine. I wouldn't wish that on anyone. It's brutal.

**Interviewer:** Yes, of course.

**Respondent:** My child wants my love.

**Interviewer:** Do you have severe physical complaints, because you just said that you feel physically...

**Respondent:** About the case. Yes, the complaints after the accident at work and now in general, you sleep much less. There's less exercise here, hobbies. To be honest, there's a lack of zest for life at the moment, a lack of motor skills, a lack of energy.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what was the conflict situation like in your parents' home? Would you say that there were a lot of conflicts or very few? Okay, one is very low and seven is a very high conflict situation.

**Respondent:** One.

**Interviewer:** Okay, one. If there were conflicts. Did your parents also involve you as children or your

siblings in the conflicts?

**Respondent:** Completely, of course.

**Interviewer:** How much and to what extent?

**Respondent:** Excuse me?

**Interviewer:** Um. How much would you say, practically not at all, or very, very much involved?

**Respondent:** Very, very much. Definitely.

**Minute 15**

**Interviewer:** So a seven, then the highest level.

**Respondent:** Of course there were certainly some things where they told us at the very end what their decisions were, but otherwise. Er, I would say six.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so very strong and strong. In what way were you involved in the conflict?

**Test person:** Well, I can remember that time. It was about 36 degrees back then. You were already in puberty. You saw some things differently now. Yes, you already had experience at 16, you had your first whiskers and you were half man. Then you were buying a house or building.... We were asked what we thought about moving to the next town. Did we agree to it? I don't have a driving licence yet, so I suddenly have to take the bus. And what I was planning to do after two years of secondary school was already being asked back then. So the plans or the wishes or ideas of the parents, what they actually intended to give me along the way, was then... we only realised much later. They sort of showed us the way, what they were planning or imagining. And so we were given the feeling that if we said, yes, we'll do it this way or no, we'll do it that way, it corresponded exactly to what they actually wanted, especially with the house building. I was in favour. My siblings were partly in favour.

**Interviewer:** Hm? Yes.

**Respondent:** Everything. Even today, with [age] or my older sibling. Still asks my father, for example, what he thinks about it.

**Interviewer:** Do you now want to be involved in arguments with your parents? So you were somehow involved in arguments when you were children.

**Respondent:** Now we didn't even notice.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay. Did you also experience conflict protection as a child? In other words, were you kept away from conflicts? One is the highest level of conflict protection and seven is the lowest. So you didn't experience any protection. If it was somehow...

**Test person:** Yes, I would say one. But all the children.

**Interviewer:** And how much attention did you receive overall as a child? One is the highest level and seven would be very low affection.

**Respondent:** One would be an exaggeration. I'd say a good two.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How strong is your current bond with your attachment figures? That could be siblings, of course. It can also be parents, grandparents, if they are still there.

**Respondent:** Contact two.

**Interviewer:** Two, okay. And how much contact do you currently have with your carers?

**Respondent:** Two.

**Interviewer:** Um, exactly. Did you have any contact with family courts, youth welfare offices?

**Respondent:** I didn't have that as a child. I've learnt all that in the one and a half years now.

**Interviewer:** Yes, exactly. And the next question is about your own biological family, i.e. your children or your still-wife Yes, still. Exactly. And that's just it. How would you categorise the conflict situation with your own family? One would be very, very low again. And let's see, there are actually the highest conflicts and disputes.

**Respondent:** The highest? Seven, quite clearly.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um. And did you or the other parent, in this case your wife, involve the children in this parental conflict?

**Respondent:** Yes, my wife completely.

**Interviewer:** So would you say level seven again, the highest level?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** In what form, if I may ask.

**Respondent:** (...) Well, my older child, she's under 15. For example, last year after the separation, a few months later, I got WhatsApp messages saying I was a bastard and all sorts of things. She was around 10 at the time. A work colleague then sent me a video of my child that she had uploaded to Tiktok, showing her smoking an e-cigarette or electronic cigarette. Yes, as a father you're shocked at

first. Yes... Er then um. What else? Er, exactly. A child was in hospital at Whitsun. I only found out from a neighbour when I was in hospital and asked what was going on, why the child had a swollen knee. "Fuck off! None of your business."

I said, what do the doctors say, why does my child hate me so much? I didn't do anything. And then came the statement: "If I had a knife in my hand, I'd stab you right through your heart!"

**Minute 22**

**Interviewer:** Hm

**Respondent:** All that kind of stuff. And, er, I've blocked my children's mobile phones. I have no contact. Now we have regular contact. Yes, the child's mother prevents everything.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Respondent:** As soon as the children are ill, they have school. They don't want to. They don't want to. We go away for the weekend. And I'll tell you, recently I haven't seen my children, the older one for three hours and the younger one for maybe five or six days in total.

Violence was also ordered against my children, so they were beaten, really beaten. That too was then presented to the family court, the local court, the youth welfare office with an affidavit. Then you just said yes, the children have to come to terms with it. It's simply a trauma for them. Yes, trauma for the children. Okay, I understand. But excuse me, my children are beating when I have video recordings myself. How my ex-wife or still-wife beats my little child, knocks the mobile phone out of his hand and screams: "You'll never have contact with him again!" That's simply contradictory. They don't understand some of the legal points.

**Interviewer:** How much conflict protection have your children experienced? One would be the highest conflict protection and seven the lowest, so that they are really protected, so to speak, from conflicts or disputes. The highest level of conflict protection would be a one and the lowest would be a seven this time.

**Respondent:** Well, I'll put it this way, I'll say it in school marks one would be very good... I'll say a five.

**Interviewer:** Um, and how much attention did your children receive overall? Again, one would be the highest level of affection.

**Respondent:** Until the divorce, until the separation, I'll say two.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay, how strong is the current bond between your children and their carers?

**Respondent:** I can't say. The mother does everything to ensure that the children get what they want. (...) They were also told at school, for example, that my little child....My mum is buying me a cat. Yes, she did. That's what the social education worker told the youth welfare office. Mum is buying me a cat so that I'll forget about Dad sooner. And the cat, the stupid fucking animal is actually in the house and nobody suddenly asks why, why, why? The mum who does that? ... Well.

**Interviewer:** Yes, can you estimate how much contact your children currently have with their carers?

**Respondent:** Very well, because they live together.

**Interviewer:** Have you had contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers? Since the divorce or separation? In what form? By telephone, in person, in writing?

**Respondent:** All sorts of things.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe this relationship with the family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers?

**Respondent:** Youth welfare office bad, family court bad.

**Interviewer:** Okay, would you use this help again or recommend it to others? Help from them. Yes, what they did.

**Interviewee:** There are two very large associations or organisations in Germany, one is Väteraufbruch. I'm an active member of both. What's interesting is that out of tens of thousands of people in Germany, there are around 70 fathers, one single mother, who is waiting with the youth welfare office in [his home town], who have problems. You can also read about it on Google, that the youth welfare office here in Germany is unfortunately a company.

**Interviewer:** So you wouldn't contact them again? Do I hear that?

**Minute 28**

**Proband:** Really, I can only recommend it to everyone. Look at it as cleanly as possible, without a lawyer, without the youth welfare office, sensibly.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently in a new relationship?

**Respondent:** Me? No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how stressful is or was the separation for you? The lowest level...

**Respondent:** Seven is the highest level? Seven.

**Interviewer:** Why? If you don't mind me asking.

**Proband:** Wife, wife away, children away, family. So look at her family, acquaintances, friends, all contacts. All gone. All yes, that's where you get to know your real friends.

**Interviewer:** Hm, how stressful do you think the separation is for your children? Again, the lowest level. Seven, the highest level.

**Respondent:** For the big one. (...) Five. Well, I'd say a good one and for the little one very much.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay. Why?

**Respondent:** (...) I can just send you a few pictures later. The little one is very attached to me. And every time the child wanted to get in touch with me, just so you can imagine it now. My flat and school are not far away. Then my child came a few times. My child came round three, four and three times and always sent me these little letters. Yes, I rang briefly, but I love you, you really must read it. I gave them briefly and then went back to school. Until the mum found out. Then it was no longer allowed. (...) And that wasn't long ago.

**Interviewer:** What are the motives from the other parent's point of view? That the relationship was, so to speak, disrupted or cut off from their children?

**Respondent:** (...) The family. My ex-mother-in-law has a narcissistic disposition. She broke us up. Her sibling broke up the marriage and is currently fighting desperately to get your nephew to separate too. We have property in Turkey and only then did we find out that the properties in Turkey are all in the name of my father-in-law and mother-in-law. So it's all about money.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How did these situations come about that led to a kind of estrangement between you and your children? What factors in particular influenced this situation? You already mentioned your mother-in-law and your wife. But which...

**Respondent:** With mine, with my moving out? Yes, that was last year. The house was full of her relatives. Yes, the children were. They did everything they wanted with the children. Then came the holidays and all sorts of long-distance and mobile phone blocking. You didn't see them and everything. You basically did everything the children wanted. And yes, there was a lot. Your dad tells you all sorts of stories, so bad and so and so. Then suddenly I was... The children, they only see their mum, they have no connection to me or anything else. Yes, but I can also see it in my older child's school performance. He was actually already doing well in year five. And now in sixth grade, a report card that I got through the court, I have to sue for it.

then sue for it. Has my child slipped more towards a four? In contrast to Massiv, yes.

**Interviewer:** How old were your children when all this happened? And how long did this process take? Is it still going on?

**Respondent:** The process is still going on. The little one was under 10...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** The big one was over 10.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what consequences did that have for your children, for your wife, for the family? You had already said that your child's grades had deteriorated. That is of course also very stressful.

**Test person:** It's also very stressful. It is. You doubt it, you lose faith in the laws and in the contact, that the children will come back one day. The damage that the children suffer from this separation with all the slander, insinuations and lies, alienation. The damage will have a very, very big impact in five or six years' time.

**Interviewer:** Did you receive any support?

**Minute 36**

**Proband:** Support. Mainly from people who have been experiencing or have experienced it for years. They have supported you and, as I said, from people, especially from Väteraufbruch.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what other support would you have liked and from whom?

**Respondent:** In family policy.

**Interviewer:** Do you still have contact with the other parent, i.e. your wife? And do you have contact with your children?

**Respondent:** No, not with anyone.

**Interviewer:** Do you think it is possible to reunite with your children?

**Respondent:** Erm, no. I'd say 51% yes, 49% no.

**Interviewer:** How stressful is this estrangement from your children? We always call it alienation in

the study. For you, one would be very low and seven would be the absolute highest level of stress.

**Respondent:** The stress level is very high.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Respondent:** You don't notice anything.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay and how stressful do you think the alienation is for your children?

**Respondent:** (...) Five.

**Interviewer:** As an adult, do you have any problems with your own children? Experienced such a process of alienation, witnessed it so to speak? And with So did you experience such a process with your children or was there no process at all? So it was overnight, so to speak?

**Test person:** That time when I was still in the house. No, but after I left, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. In what way?

**Respondent:** Uh, the children would have maintained a normal relationship. If the wife didn't want to, then she would have gone her own way. But the fact that she involves the children and does it on the back of child soldiers says a lot.

**Farewell**

**Minute 40**

## 7. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV11

### 4.

**Greeting**

**Interviewer:** Yes, with pleasure. Then I would just start with the interview and ask you a few things. The first question is, how old are you?

**Respondent:** I am over 40.

**Interviewer:** OK, and which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, woman, diverse?

**Respondent:** Man.

**Interviewer:** OK, you grew up in Germany, do you have a migration background?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parental home, i.e. in terms of education, income and profession... I will now give you a few gradations and you can see where you see your parental home, i.e. very low status, below-average status, slightly below-average status, average status, slightly above-average status, above-average status or the highest status.

**Respondent:** So at least once above average.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. And your own socio-economic status. How do you rate that?

**Respondent:** So now it's mainly about financial resources?

**Interviewer:** Also education, income, profession, so all of that put together.

**Respondent:** It's also well above average.

**Interviewer:** What is your highest qualification to date? No school-leaving certificate, lower secondary school leaving certificate, intermediate secondary school leaving certificate, A-levels, bachelor's degree or university of applied sciences, master's degree, diploma or doctorate.

**Respondent:** Diploma.

**Interviewer:** OK. Do you have siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** Yes, siblings.

**Interviewer:** Mhm OK and at what age?

**Respondent:** Well, if you ask me when they were born, I can tell you more quickly, now I have to do the maths. Well, I have three, they're all younger.

**Interviewer:** OK. Do their parents live together until they are of age?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. How was your relationship with your mother?

**Respondent:** My own?

**Interviewer:** Yes, so extremely bad, very bad, bad, medium good, very good or excellent.

**Respondent:** Good.

**Interviewer:** Okay and with your father.

**Respondent:** Also good.

**Interviewer:** The experience in your parental home made you feel emotionally prepared or equipped for adult life. Extremely poor, very poor, poor, moderately good, very good or excellent.

**Respondent:** Prepared for adult life, so.... medium.

**Interviewer:** Medium OK, can you explain why?

**Respondent:** There was actually no culture of argument or discussion in my family. We avoided conflicts and didn't deal with or resolve them. Instead, we simply didn't see them through to the end. There might be two opinions, that's OK, but we didn't discuss them at all and I think that's a big weakness that didn't necessarily make my life easier as an adult.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I can understand that. How are you feeling at the moment? In terms of mental health. Extremely bad, very bad...

**Respondent:** Yes, no, extremely good.

**Interviewer:** OK, so there is a very good or an excellent.

**Respondent:** Ah OK, very good, yes.

**Interviewer:** OK. And physically?

**Respondent:** Excellent

**Interviewer:** Very good is also good to hear. Have you ever received psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, and may I ask why and for how long?

**Respondent:** Well, I sought help during the post-separation phase, I was in therapy for 2 years. Once a month. And then several times selectively, when it was about the children, how they were actually doing, how to deal with the situation, that's when I got help. Um, and then again for myself later, once a month for about a year and a half.

#### **Minute 11**

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. Is there a diagnosis? So something like depression, anxiety disorder, adjustment disorder? ADHD or post-traumatic stress disorder?

**Respondent:** No, no. Those were behavioural therapy approaches.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Well, the one thing you've already described a bit about the conflict situations in your parents' home. Is it a very low conflict situation, slightly below average, below average, average, slightly above average or above average? How would you rate it? You mentioned it briefly earlier.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's difficult about these questionnaires, no, because you have to look behind it a bit, there are 2 levels, so on the visible level there were no conflicts for us, on the invisible level there were of course conflicts that were not resolved.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes.

**Respondent:** Yes, ultimately I would say...there were fewer conflicts than average

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. How much conflict protection did you experience overall as a child? Highest conflict protection, above average conflict protection, slightly above average conflict protection, average conflict protection, slightly below average, below average or very low.

**Respondent:** Very low.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK, how much attention did you receive overall as a child, i.e. similar to the same categorisation?

**Respondent:** On average, there was also none.

**Interviewer:** Yes, it was also average.

**Respondent:** Yes, I think that sums it up quite well. I was the only child in the first few years of my life. The focus was naturally on me. But I hardly remember that. And then my siblings came along, which of course changed everything a bit.

**Interviewer:** How strong is your current bond with your attachment figures, i.e. your parents? Highest attachment level, above-average attachment level, slightly above-average attachment level, average, slightly below-average or below-average. Or a very low one.

**Respondent:** Slightly below average, I would say.

**Interviewer:** OK. If you justify that. Why would you rate it that way?

**Respondent:** They are still not in a position to really discuss topics with each other, to talk about them, to shed light on them. This topic of child alienation or dealing with children in particular offers so many opportunities where it would be better to talk things over or express your thoughts before taking action, because otherwise it can lead to injuries. And that still doesn't work.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Interviewee:** Well, my parents are actually pretty sure of themselves and I sometimes wish that we would just talk about certain things first, then sleep on it for a night and then maybe take action. But that's my wish. No. My parents can of course do what they want, but you can see that the bond is probably below average, slightly below average yes.

**Minute 15**

**Interviewer:** Yes, I can understand that. Did you have any contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers or similar organisations as a child?

**Respondent:** Not at all.

**Interviewer:** OK, good, then we can jump straight to your own situation now. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own family? Very low conflict situations, below average conflict situations, slightly below average average, slightly above average, above average, highest conflict situations.

**Respondent:** Above average, second highest level, yes.

**Interviewer:** Did you or the other parent involve the children in your conflict?

**Respondent:** That's a kind of attribution of blame that I... Yes, I find that a bit difficult, but, yes, my ex-wife involved the children in the conflict.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and to what extent?

**Respondent:** If you then ask whether I did that too, then from my point of view I would clearly say no, not actively in any case. Passively, as far as feelings are concerned, like certain information that reaches you at the moment when the children are with you, what they do to you. Of course, you can rule out the possibility of the children realising that something is strange or something like that, but consciously: no.

**Interviewer:** In fact, this categorisation also exists here. On the one hand, there is this practically not or unconsciously. We are all human, we sometimes react intuitively and the other person can notice it. That's why we've included this categorisation. Okay. Then I would categorise you in this category. And then for your wife there is very little, little, medium, strong, very strong or extreme.

**Respondent:** By my wife do you mean the mother of the children?

**Interviewer:** So the mother of the children. Sorry, yes.

**Respondent:** Yes, okay again. Because I was distracted.

**Interviewer:** Very little, little, medium, strong, very strong or extreme.

**Respondent:** Very strong, manipulative, very strong, yes.

**Interviewer:** Yes, and how much conflict protection did your children experience overall during that time? Both from them now and from other people involved. The highest level of conflict protection, above-average conflict protection, slightly above-average conflict protection, average, slightly below average, below average or very low.

**Respondent:** I can't answer that, at least not globally. Well, with us, with my wife now and with me, you have definitely experienced conflict protection. But neither at school, nor at the youth welfare office, nor at any of the other institutions involved did they really experience conflict protection. That's why I can't give a generalised answer.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** You have to imagine that my little child came to us. She first went to the bathroom and had to go first, so every time, quite regularly after school or after a handover, she first went to the toilet, then she changed and put on her own clothes that she felt like wearing. We didn't comment on that, we just noticed it. But it was like that. Yes, it was almost a ritual for her, that she could simply let go the moment she arrived at our house. And as you can see, it's not that easy to answer. That's definitely... Those are two different things.

**Interviewer:** Yes OK, I understand that. How much affection did your children receive overall, even before the separation? Highest level of affection, above average, slightly above average, average, slightly below average, below average or very low.

**Respondent:** That's about me now, no, mum. So not...

**Interviewer:** Exactly, just how you rate it. It's just about your view of things.

**Respondent:** Yes, so now I don't have to include how my ex-wife acted with the children, but only how I acted with the children, how much attention she received from me.

**Interviewer:** It's about how much attention the children received overall, but only from her point of view. Of course, you can also split it up if you say that your, i.e. the children's mother, dealt with the children differently to you, then of course you can also split it up if there are big differences.



**Minute 20**

**Test person:** Yes, I have to split that up. So for me I would say what was the second highest level, so...

**Interviewer:** Above-average level of affection?

**Respondent:** Above-average attention. Yes, we did. Yes, that was super nice. So we had a very close relationship with my children. And they had to work with their mother. There were rules that had to be adhered to. And if that worked, then they got praise and attention, if not, then not.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Test person:** So the children couldn't be the way they are, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, as a father, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers or similar? And in what form?

**Respondent:** Well, the first proceedings were initiated by my ex-wife. That was a contact procedure. It was about moving from the parity alternation model to a residence model, so that the children would live with the mother with a surplus. That was the mother's concern. And an expert was also involved. We also experienced that. Legal counsellors were involved. The Youth Welfare Office was also involved in the form of child-orientated proceedings. Yes, that was a procedure. Last year there was another contact procedure, which I then sought after it was clear that neither child would be coming, and the youth welfare office, the court anyway, the guardian ad litem and lawyers were involved in both cases, of course.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** And then of course there were the divorce proceedings. We both had lawyers there too.

**Interviewer:** OK. Did you find this, this, this contact with the professionals helpful and supportive or not?

**Test person:** Rather not. You have to differentiate here too, no, it depends very, very much on the people you're dealing with. Sometimes you get the impression that they don't really care what it's all about. A family case is dealt with in 40 minutes, while a "minor drug offence" ... is heard for five hours with various police officers who have to give evidence. It's not proportionate, isn't it? So sometimes it seems difficult at the family court, the judges were changed during the proceedings, so there was no consistency there either, which also makes it easier. The first guardian ad litem. No, I didn't feel like I was in good hands there. With the second one, it was more after the proceedings. Then she was open to the fact that I could talk to her. And the youth welfare office? Alienation is not physical damage, visible damage, no. So the first thing I heard was: "Do you know how many children are raped or beaten up, they are physically harmed, so we don't have time to deal with that, which is why they are here with us now."

**Interviewer:** Okay, wow.

**Test person:** At first I didn't feel like I'd caught up at all. At first, I had to explain a lot until I understood the situation.

**Interviewer:** That's right, of course. But did anything work, can you say that it worked well or that it helped?

**Test person:** No, to be honest, no. In the first proceedings, the expert report was 140 pages long and the children were also interviewed. That the mother was overburdened and overwhelmed by the overall situation and that the children should be with the mother with a slight overhang so that the mother could calm down. That was the reason given in the first contact proceedings. That was not child-orientated, and it did not speak in favour of the father and mother sharing the children equally, as one would actually wish. It was like a bazaar, no, the mother wanted 95% of the time with the children and I wanted a weekend overnight every two weeks, I could have the children, that was her starting position. And then, and in the end it was: "Mr ... , you've actually achieved a lot more than the mother now, if you look at where the mother came from 95% and is now somewhere around 55 or 57%. That was all worked out over the course of a few days, so you are much less far away from the 50% than you are from the 95%."

**Minute 25**

**Interviewer:** OK, yes.

**Respondent:** So and if I had known that beforehand, I would have said, OK, I'll go for 100%. So in the interests of the children, because I think they need both parents. I wanted to stay at 50%. And the compromise or what was negotiated in the end was that the mother needed to rest. That's why the children need to be with their mum a bit more. So I didn't think that was helpful at all.

**Interviewer:** No, that's right.

**Respondent:** And also a difficult justification in the second procedure last year. That actually started with the fact that she, that the youth welfare office of course said that contact must be made possible. And stomach pains, or what the mother then cited, are not reasons why a child cannot change. The father can also take care of the children's health issues, so that has to happen, contact must be allowed. And then an appointment was made for a Friday afternoon, after school I was only supposed to pick up my little child from the mother for the weekend, that's what the mother was told. She was told to please make it happen. She didn't do that. So the Youth Welfare Office made an order, so to speak, so it can't, it can't give any instructions, but it clearly said, dear mother, you have to make it possible for the father and the child to spend time together, with the result that my little child came home to the mother. Then the mother said that her father had now called in the youth welfare office and the child had to go to dad, but if she didn't want to, then the child didn't have to either.

Yes, the situation was that my little child didn't come with me. I wouldn't have wanted this escalation at all, but it was arranged by the office, also with the advice that you could go out for ice cream with your child. That was in February. So now is not necessarily the time to go out for ice cream. No, so and. The time that I spend with my children, that or spent with them, was actually always quality time. We actually knew exactly what we enjoyed doing, at what time of year, what we could do. But to get to the point, the youth welfare office was of course no longer available on a Friday afternoon to clarify the situation. So an appointment or a solution was made on a date when the youth welfare office was no longer available.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I see.

**Respondent:** The youth welfare office, the youth welfare office employee in charge, had also said that I would also be in court during the proceedings. I've got to know the mother, I know how she is, I know how to judge her and I know what I'm going to say. Yes, who wasn't there at the appointment, exactly the youth welfare office employee, but a deputy came, who of course had no idea and didn't speak to the mother. No, so really not helpful at all.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's a pity. OK.

**Test person:** I'm curious. I've now been back to the youth work worker, I have an appointment with her soon and the mother is also invited.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Respondent:** Because she's seen, based on all the incidents, that the children have been absent from school since they've not been with me. Absurd absences, 55 days, 42 days. And a few other things, that she said I'd make an appointment with them both now, and that hasn't worked in the past, right. So the mother isn't prepared to have any talks, moderated talks, mediation talks under any circumstances, she won't do it. And there are no consequences. The court said in the last proceedings, dear mother, you must, if the youth welfare office or the educational counselling service in the case says that you would like to cooperate, now please at this point, then you must make yourself available. The deposit went out, it was rejected. Consequence zero.

**Minute 30**

**Interviewer:** And how, how long have you been out of contact? With your children.

**Respondent:** Well, I haven't had any contact with my small child for 22 months now. You can And with my older child it's been over a year longer...

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes, I didn't want to interrupt you.

**Respondent:** Yes, I've had a bit of contact with my small child again over the summer. She got a mobile phone for her birthday and we were able to write a bit on WhatsApp, but that's no longer possible. Letters that I write, parcels that I send. I don't get a response, I don't know if they reach the children at all. Or whether they are not passed on in the first place. I can't say.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, how old were your children when this process started? The little one was still quite small, right?

**Respondent:** Well, at the time of the separation from my ex-wife, my little child was one year old. My ex-wife was able to start working straight away, which she did after a year. I did the familiarisation with the daycare centre, which I did for both children. And the moment she knew she could go back to work, she wanted the separation. So my small child was 1 year old, my big child was under 6.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, OK. What do you think were the reasons for the mother of the child to go down this path?

**Respondent:** The path of separation or alienation?

**Interviewer:** The path of alienation.

**Respondent:** I would say absolute control. So what I or we, my current wife and I, did with the children. The way we endeavoured to enjoy their hobbies. She didn't like that. We were constantly given lists of what medication to give, even though the children weren't ill. I spoke to the paediatricians and they said that we'd done all the tests, the children are healthy, they're sporty, there's no need for action. And yet we've always been given some homeopathic stuff... I don't know, something like that. Clear instructions from 10 degrees outside the children have to wear hats.

I got a whole Excel spreadsheet, an instruction manual for the children. And of course it was annoying if we did it differently. Or when we said, okay, yes, these 5 points, we can implement them, they seem sensible to us, but not the others, of course that's not possible. I am simply disruptive as a father. I also have custody. I'm just disruptive in what she wants to do with the children.

**Interviewer:** How stressful do you think the separation was for the children?

**Respondent:** Probably a lot. But we never talked about that. I moved out even though she wanted the separation. I found a new flat near the nursery for both children at the time. We lived there together, so we, the children and I, had to make this flat habitable for us and set it up as our home and feel comfortable in it. I think the children enjoyed that too, but of course it's still a situation that children don't want. They want their parents to get back together and the questions did come up from time to time. We celebrated another Christmas together. And there were always questions. And when are you coming back...? When will we be a family again? So I think they suffered a lot from that too.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I understand that. And how stressful was the separation for you? Were you able to understand it or was it acceptable for you?

### **Minute 35**

**Proband:** Not at first. I really resisted that. I tried everything to get the relationship back on track, with external help, with couples therapy. But she didn't want any of that and gave me six months, so to speak, and when that was over, she said it was over. And until then, I fought for our family, for our relationship and at that moment. When it was so clear that she wasn't even seriously considering it. I then moved out relatively quickly because I was looking for a flat, which isn't that easy. That also takes time, but as soon as I moved out....

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's right.

**Interviewee:** From this togetherness, from this relationship, even being physically separated, I suddenly felt better. From then on, it was a liberation for me, also in dealing with the children. At that time, I didn't really have the opportunity at home to be with the children the way I am or the way I would have liked to be. Comforting children, holding them in my arms, reading to them. Being with them... well, no, the children were basically always taken away from me. So it's so clear now in hindsight, isn't it? But it's been over five years now. Yes, at first I was doing badly and then I was doing very well and I think that's one of the reasons why my ex-wife couldn't cope with it. She thought I would fall into a deep hole if I was no longer with her and still had her. And that just wasn't the case.

**Interviewer:** Are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Respondent:** Yes, we also got married.

**Interviewer:** Do you have contact with the estranged parent? So to the other parent.

**Respondent:** To the estranged parent in that case?

**Interviewer:** Exactly, the alienating one.

**Respondent:** And I, well, there are contact possibilities, but I no longer seek contact and I don't get any information at all about the children or about anything from her. We have, if you like, the possibility of contact by e-mail and we could call each other, but we've hardly ever done that. E-mail would be the contact channel, but no, actually there is no contact.

**Interviewer:** Do you see the possibility of reuniting with the child at some point? So from your point of view, is that possible again at some point?

**Test person:** So from the bottom of your heart? Absolutely yes. The more time passes, the more difficult the process will be. No, I basically no longer know my older child. And I haven't seen my small child for almost 2 years now. Well, once at school in between, I went to the open day and had my child explain a project to me. He really liked it and the teachers said afterwards: "Wow, it was great that you were there. And [name of child] was really happy."

Afterwards, I got an email from the mum asking me not to do that. The children should be able to go to school without fear.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's the level it's at, no. So the more time passes now, the greater I think the task of dealing with... with each other in an understanding way. So me with the children, of course, if, if the opportunity arises, immediately and always. And conversely, we're living a slightly different life now than we did when the children were still here, no.

**Interviewer:** Mhm and are there any children with the new partner, or?

**Respondent:** It hasn't worked out yet, maybe that's one way of putting it. Well, it's there and I actually always wanted 4 children. I have 2 in principle.

**Interviewer:** OK. OK, yes, it's a different life than with children, you can....

**Test person:** Totally, yes. I mean, you also see....

**Interviewer:** Yes, even if you wish it were different. I believe that with all my heart. But yes, you live differently without it.

**Test person:** Yes, forced to, no. So suddenly there's, there's too much time to fill, no. So after my little child stopped coming, it took me three months to find myself again.

#### **Minute 40**

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, I can totally understand that. So even if you want it to be different, you just have to see how you can still make the time pass. It has to go on for longer, even if you always wish that the process would be reversed or that the children would decide differently, or even the ex-partner. That's why the ex-partner simply has to change their mind. You still have to go on living for yourself.

**Test person:** Exactly. And it was difficult at first because I always thought it couldn't be, they have to be at the door now. So when the doorbell rang, my first thought was: "Ah, they're finally back!" And that didn't happen. And then, well, you can see in this table that I'm somehow doing well at work, that I'm not having any difficulties at all. Of course I work more now, no. So I do sport regularly, which simply wasn't possible with children in that way, no. Because time was consumed differently, which is completely fine. But it took me a while to come to the realisation that I had to fill my time differently, also for my own sake. And of course, if there was a chance that the children would come back, I would give it up immediately, no. I would reduce my work, I would cut back on my sport or not carry on, simply because the children would need me when they... Exactly, yes.

**Interviewer:** How stressful was or is the alienation for you in this whole categorisation? A very low stress level. A below-average stress level, a slightly below-average stress level, average stress level, slightly above average, above average or the highest stress level?

**Test person:** It's the highest load level, absolutely clear. So it's like. So it's a bit like the hostages in Israel, some of whom are children who were snatched from their parents. I'm sorry to draw this parallel for myself, but the pain that the parents feel when their children are gone for an uncertain period of time and you don't know how they're doing. So it's like grieving without someone having died.

**Interviewer:** Yes, and when I know what will happen next and how they will be in their absence... so what you can't see yourself, yes, I can totally understand that.

**Respondent:** And that's also because of the, well, who I'm in contact with, and this may surprise you a bit, is my ex-wife's partner in the meantime, right. He was the stepdad of my children, so to speak. We moved in together and of course I wasn't sure what kind of person he was. What is he like for my children? How do they like him? How does he deal with them? And so on, but we've actually found a, I'd say quite neutral, good relationship with each other and we're always in contact. And he also says that he broke up with her. And since then it's got really bad, she's actually cut off all social contact. With lots of people and for the children too, and he also says that it can't be good for the children. And he experienced it with her, right. So that's one of the reasons why I've now called in the youth welfare office again. I know you're not doing well. They're not doing as well as they could be.

#### **Minute 45**

**Interviewer:** OK, that's basically the answer to the next question. How stressful do you consider the alienation to be for your children? Also in this gradation: very low stress level, below average stress level, slightly below average stress level, average stress level, slightly above average, above average or highest.

**Test person:** Yes, basically the highest. So if you think about it now, the conflict of loyalty has somehow disappeared. So my young child stayed with us for a year after my older child had already stopped coming to us. He continued to come to us and so actually always decided in our favour to a certain extent, even though his mother and sibling wanted it differently. So that's no longer the case

and yet I don't think they're happy with it. Not even my older child. My ideal situation for our older child would be for us to have a sensible relationship with each other, the mother and me. So that our children can grow up well with both parents. That would actually be what I want for them. I can manage well without children, no. Well, I'm going to put it bluntly. My life, as you heard earlier, no, how am I doing mentally and how am I doing physically? I'm doing very, very well, apart from the moments when I think about my children and realise that they're not doing well. But I can, I, I think I also need it for myself or for the children, when the time comes that they really need me, then they don't need a wreck, then they need someone who is strong for them, like that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes. I understand that. Good, we're at the end of the questionnaire.

**Respondent:** Yes, okay.

**Interviewer:** Do you still have any questions from the many questions in the interview? Anything unclear for you? Would you like to say anything in conclusion?

**Interviewee:** Well, you explained at the beginning what this study is for, in order to make the profession involved in the alienation processes a little more aware of the topic and what is actually involved. I would like to differentiate a little more. I don't know where the study is going and where the results are going, but the initial contacts when a parent dares to go to a state institution and ask for help. This initial contact is incredibly important, so that you feel that you are in good hands and understood. That means the youth welfare office. From my point of view, it would be priority 1, they should know about it and unfortunately there are many more cases than are known. That's why I think it's important in the interests of the children that the youth welfare office is trained and, secondly, the guardians ad litem. In our case here, the guardians ad litem, i.e. the children and I, um, I don't think they got the whole picture. So if interviews with the father only take place over the phone. But if the mother is visited and the mother is present when the children are interviewed, then I think that makes for an unbalanced relationship. Maybe so -

**Interviewer:** Mhm, yes.

**Interviewee:** That some people can manage that, but I don't feel that I'm taken very seriously as a father or as an estranged person in this case, and I'd also like to see neutrality there first, really. That both sides are looked at intensively but also equally.

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, absolutely understandable. Yes, and it's true that this alienation process often happens quietly.

**Respondent:** Yes, thank you very much.

**Interviewer:** And at some point the children get to an age where the mother has less influence on what the children do.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's exactly what I'm always told. However, none of these people really know my ex-wife. It's difficult to judge how persuasive she can actually be and. I'm worried that it won't work out. No pressure is certainly helpful for the children at some point. I now have no other option but to involve the youth welfare office again, because I know that the children have not been well in the last year. That's why I've done everything out of court. I tried everything that was possible to avoid going to court. And even now I don't know whether I'll go to court, that depends very much on the next conversation.

**Minute 56**

**Interviewer:** I'm definitely keeping my fingers crossed for them. So I would like it to work out. I would wish it for you. And yes.

**Test person:** Yes, thank you very much.

**Farewell**

**Minute 62**

## 8. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV12

**Greeting**

**Interviewer:** All right. Right, then just a few words in advance. There are about 45 questions. Plus or minus. Depending on how you answer them, a few may be omitted. Or some may be added. It usually takes between half an hour and an hour.

**Test person:** Well, I'm prepared. I'm prepared for it.

**Interviewer:** All right.

**Test person:** That's not a problem at all. No problem at all. May I just ask in advance, after all the work has been processed accordingly, so to speak? Will the participants be informed in any way or will they have the opportunity to read in one or two things? At the end.

**Interviewer:** I had already sent exactly this question to the lecturers. I'm waiting for an answer. How and whether the test subjects will also have access to this study later. But it wasn't quite clear whether it would be public later or whether a version could be sent to them. The lecturer, I believe you also had contact with him. Dr Dr.

**Subject:** Gonzales Of course.

**Interviewer:** Exactly that, who should get in touch with you again. But I will remind him again that he should remember to get in touch with the test person. All right. Good. So that you are prepared. There are a few questions about you at the beginning. Then there are questions about your childhood home, how you grew up and finally the questions about your family and your estranged children. Well, let's get started. How old are you?

**Respondent:** You know, think about it for a moment. 19... born. Now I'm in maths mode. I'm a bit behind. So still under 50.

**Interviewer:** All right? And which gender do you feel you belong to?

**Respondent:** (...) Excuse me. Male. Definitely male.

**Interviewer:** Did you grow up in Germany or do you have a migrant background?

**Respondent:** According to the information. No, unless the former GDR counts as a migration background.

**Interviewer:** We would see that as German.

**Respondent:** Only I am actually aware of the German origin.

**Interviewer:** All right. So? How would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parental home? In other words, education, income and occupation of your parents. One would be: It is a very low status. Two: Below average status. Three would be: Slightly below average status, four is average, five is slightly above average, six is above average and seven is the highest status.

**Respondent:** So if I look back at the family history, then I would clearly describe him as average.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then an even four.

**Respondent:** Yes, so that's how I would categorise it now and the question of what you ultimately make of the study. My mum was a nurse. There were upward and downward trends, but I would describe it as average for GDR times.

**Interviewer:** All right. And on the same scale, how would you categorise your own socio-economic status?

**Respondent:** (...) Yes, that's the question of any level. Er, materially quite depleted. Emotionally pretty high up. Intelligence certainly also relatively high up. Although the term would have to be defined, of course. Erm. Now the question is, how should I clock it? That's a good question. Do I see myself. (...) Do I see myself right now. (...) But that's just the question Is it actually a bit difficult because a lot of the work with children is done free of charge, so as they say, in this voluntary mode.

**Interviewer:** Um.

**Respondent:** (...) As the sociologist says socially, social status is not below average, material things are unimportant.

**Interviewer:** Exactly. So socio-economic, that is, how you see yourself in your profession and in your income and in your educational status. If that helps.

**Respondent:** Yes, so in terms of educational status, I definitely see myself in the upper range. And yes, if I look at it holistically and with life, with the environment with which I am allowed to work and again the returns, then I see myself in the upper field.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Would you then go for slightly above average or above average?

**Interviewee:** But I don't tend to be arrogant, although perhaps I should be. But I don't know. I wouldn't describe it as slightly above average.

**Interviewer:** All right. Then I've got a five here. So? And what is your highest qualification to date?

**Respondent:** (...) Purely academic or overall. Or it is said.

**Interviewer:** It also goes up to a doctorate here.

**Respondent:** (...) I haven't done a doctorate. What is it all about? I'm [profession], commercial etc. I have several degrees, so from there. I've never worried about the amount when it comes to degrees. I honestly never cared about the amount. I was concerned about how it would be used and what it would offer me in terms of content. In that respect. I don't have a doctorate, that's not me. I have two

private school qualifications and a vocational qualification and a commercial qualification.

**Interviewer:** Well, I can help you briefly. We have the classic no qualifications, secondary school, intermediate school, Abitur, then bachelor's degree or university of applied sciences, master's degree, diploma and then doctorate.

**Test person:** Okay, if those are the ones, because then I'm in the school-leaving phase. Then I'm on my way with an Abitur.

**Interviewer:** All right. Do you have siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** I have siblings. I have one sibling.

**Interviewer:** All right. So your parents stayed together until you were of age. Er.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** What was the reason for the separation?

**Respondent:** Good question. I don't know. So now the story is a bit more complicated because I don't know how to go one day. Well, I don't know my father. We have two fathers. I got to know my sibling's father as my father, who was drafted back into the army during the enrolment period in the GDR. And I know that my parents were about to get married. And in the context of him being in the army and coming back, there was some kind of event on his side, from my point of view today, which led to a separation that was quite unpleasant, so to speak. So that's how I can describe it. I get it when the question is somehow there. Then you have to see how far they can somehow categorise it with the question. I can't give the reason, the exact reason.

**Interviewer:** No, that's good enough. Um, then, how would you describe your relationship with your mother?

**Respondent:** (...) Um. Very deep and warm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That is, if one is extremely bad and seven is extremely good. On what scale of a number would they rate it?

**Test person:** It's extreme. It was one. It was a very good relationship. We had a very good relationship. All right, I'm not going to take any chances with that either. So, if, if it helps you. So I don't have a university degree because my mother was diagnosed with cancer, I was studying at a university of applied sciences and I had to decide to look after my mother, which I couldn't guarantee because of the way the university of applied sciences was organised at the time, from eight in the morning until eight at night, and I decided to stop my studies to look after my mother.

## Minute 9

**Interviewer:** Okay. And as I understood it, they didn't have much contact with their biological father.

**Respondent:** I don't know my biological father. It was obvious. It was kind of a secret somehow in the family. I was 15 at the time of the Jugendweihe and immediately afterwards. That's how the first directions came about. And to this day I still don't know. There is, there is. Judging by the pictures, there's a Hungarian or a Frenchman who could be a candidate. But unfortunately, whatever else was going on internally in the family, I have to say, we had an uncle in state security. Married into it. So there was quite a lot of political hullabaloo, so to speak. Although we had nothing to do with it and what things were involved, unfortunately I still haven't been able to find out.

**Interviewer:** (...) So the next question would be The experience in her parental home made her feel emotionally prepared for adult life. One would be: You feel extremely poorly equipped for adult life and seven would be: You feel excellently equipped.

**Respondent:** (...) If I look back from today's perspective, then I would say that I feel slightly under-equipped. For the reason that I realised that my so-called male role models, who were undoubtedly present in the family, my uncle etc. as a child, were okay, they were very, very good. In other words, I learnt a lot of manual skills and so on. But later on, I think the father role was actually lacking, I had an imbalance for a long time from my point of view nowadays, because my mother wasn't able to do it, because my mum wasn't able to. It wasn't possible, it wasn't possible to take on a role that was there. In that respect, I think I had to work quite a lot and lived quite a lot or for quite a long time from the fact that my role models were fictional. They were book authors. Exactly. So my role models were called. Thomson, Pushkin, Tolstoy and so on. Certainly also somehow cinematic realisations, so to speak, but not the actors themselves, but rather the conveyed role at that moment. So there was a lot about that. Which I don't judge as wrong in any way. But when I look back today, I think there is. I certainly needed a lot of time to find myself and a certain form of sang, as they always

say. If you go around in this patriarchal way of thinking, then I'm said to have had a pretty good start and a good understanding of femininity. That could be seen as both positive and negative. In the business world, I feel, I feel that way when it is lived in this heartlessness, in this supposed masculinity.

**Interviewer:** But....

**Interviewee:** Unfortunately not well, because this taking the piss and this lying around is not mine. [...] And that's why it's actually always been important to me that I've realised that both parents are definitely part of it. They are important. Mum and dad each have their own task and both carry femininity within them. [...] And that's why I think that both sides are important in principle, but in a healthy state. They have to be mentally and in this so-called inner child and this striking term really tidy within themselves. The best possible.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Is that, yes, that helps a lot. So, then the next questions are about your health. What would you say? How are you feeling at the moment? Psychologically, health-wise? One would be extremely bad and seven is excellent.

**Respondent:** I feel excellent and strong.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And in physical health.

**Interviewee:** Apart from the fact that I've now somehow spent two days because someone had to spread a cold, but I've now cured it in two days and am on the mend again, I feel excellent in terms of my health.

**Interviewer:** Okay? Are you or have you been undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** As part of a relationship that I had, that I used to have. [...] where I actually agreed to go to a counselling session for myself, but it ended relatively quickly because the question then arose: Why are you actually sitting here? [...]

**Interviewer:** Okay, but you never received an official diagnosis here.

**Respondent:** [...] He had to formulate something a bit like that at the time or he formulated something and that's when the term, which he explained to me, of adjustment disorder was added. [...]

## Minute 20

**Interviewer:** (...) So then to the next question. Apart from the cold, which I hope is just getting better, do you have any other serious physical complaints?

**Respondent:** No, not at all.

**Interviewer:** Good, then we come to the questions about your parental home. This relates to the conflict situation. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parental home? One would be: It was only a very low conflict situation, almost none at all. And seven was the highest conflict situation. Always arguments, always conflicts

**Respondent:** (...) No, then... The parental home is now limited to the lowest family denominator. So that means mum and the situation, so to speak, or would be, so to speak, if the connections, if of course there are also very intensive relationships with the grandparents etc., that this framework is also added.

**Interviewer:** Will include the framework in that case.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so all in all, I would say it was a largely conflict-free parental home. We weren't punished or subjected to any kind of circus. Not at all. That didn't exist at all. So, um, we didn't punish stories like that either, so no fisticuffs anyway. It wasn't common practice at all, it was frowned upon. Punishments in the sense of how it was common practice back then, like one or the other, let's say pocket money withdrawal or cuts, house arrest or some kind of circus. There was nothing like that. I don't know anything like that, I didn't get to know it. That's one part of it. But in the course of the reunification and the increasing ageing and growing older, conflicts arose within the wider family, i.e. grandparents, aunts and relatives. Here and there, conflicts arose in connection with the historical-social-political situation. [...]

But if the question is how within the parents or within the parental structure, so to speak, then this time was definitely characterised in part by the fact that potential or conflicts arose, which is very surprising.

**Interviewer:** Would you say that you were consciously or unconsciously involved in such conflicts, if they ever existed?

**Test person:** A No, of course. So that in any case. [...] So yes, I was definitely involved, consciously and unconsciously, on both levels, which led me relatively early on to definitely start dealing with



certain things in a completely different and new way after the fall of communism.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that you experienced any form of conflict protection from your mother in this regard? So one would be: you were very strongly protected from such conflicts and seven was: you were practically on your own

**Respondent:** That's what I meant. [...] ...that my mum was a very, very sensitive, very fine woman, so to speak, and I really lacked this, as you would say, paternal protection, so I started to build it up myself. That was a lot, a lot of work. My mum would have me there. (...) Generally speaking, I was rather unprotected. Not that she didn't protect me. Not like that. But for that, for that, for that, for the intensity that was there. [...] Maybe it seems absurd now that it's just in my head to see my mum no longer suffering as an example of how I exercised the protective function. In other words, I stood in front of my mum as a man and if she somehow wanted to get to know him or whatever, then he had to get past me first, so to speak.

### Minute 30

**Interviewer:** (...) What would you say? How much affection did you receive as a child? It doesn't just have to have been your mother, it could also have been other family members.

**Respondent:** I received a lot of attention. I slept at my grandma's every weekend. My grandma was sacred to me, my grandad was sacred to me. [...] We had beautiful domestic communities [...] we simply had a wonderful domestic community. [...] So I definitely can't complain about the affection.

**Interviewer:** How strong do you see your current bond with your carers? One would be: It is the highest attachment status, i.e. the highest attachment level. And seven would be: You have no attachment to these people at all.

**Respondent:** Belong to these people. Which person are you referring to so far?

**Interviewer:** All the people I mentioned. There are actually a few, several of them. It could be your mother, it could be your family, it could be your partner, friends, things like that.

**Respondent:** Okay. That becomes problematic now in that my mother died two years after suffering from cancer, my grandmother died. [...] So it's just that I'm really getting to know an environment of incredibly great new people, but there's hardly anything left from the environment of the old days, so to speak. [...]

### Minute 39

**Interviewer:** Um, there is a follow-up question to the last question, and that is what your current contact with your carers is like. This could be the contact with former caregivers that you mentioned or the current ones that you have now

**Proband:** Contact with the alumni. As I said, it's around zero. I would be pleased if one or two things improved again, with an increasing willingness to know, etc. [...] Of course, a lot of contacts and friendships have developed between many, many affected parents. In combination, as I said privately, professionally, even if the subject area is similar. Professors and doctors who also specialise in the topic of children and the situation of child protection.

**Interviewer:** It fits quite well that we are talking about child protection. Did you or did you have contact as a child with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts and the like?

**Respondent:** Not at all. Not at all.

**Interviewer:** I can skip the next questions. OK, then I'll come to your family with the estranged child. How would you categorise the conflict situation with this family? One would be: There were no conflicts at all and seven: There were only conflicts.

**Test person:** So if it's the case that there were no conflicts, that would be a lie, because then there would have been no separation, I would say. So I know the relationship isn't conflict-free anyway. In the end. After the separation. So she left. She met someone new and left in a very violent way. So from her side. Her boyfriend or her new partner is a ticking time bomb from my point of view. I let her know that too. As a result, the child didn't go with her, so to speak, but stayed with me. But we had both retained joint custody and she didn't disagree with that in any way. Or anything else for that matter. How poisonous. She was more tempted by her new boyfriend. And there was a brief window of time that was definitely full of conflict. So death threats against me, violence against me and our child.

This gentleman was constantly intruding into the flat we still lived in together at the time, which she then cancelled behind my back. So she then kicked quite a lot for a short time and was, overran my child and me, in a rather strange way and then that died down, but then that died down again. After she was out and the child was with me. Erm. And I then did the work to make sure that the child didn't lose the ground under its feet and did everything I could to make sure that it didn't lead to... so to speak.

I'm using this term now, if it doesn't fit in my opinion, but that it somehow leads to hateful thoughts or anger or something else towards mum. It has to be said that she was the one who didn't get in touch for months and weeks after she left. So we only ever had internal agreements, i.e. with her coming and she also had the opportunity at any time and there was also a temporary request or support, so to speak, from the youth welfare office. I actually even wrote that it was good for the child to live with me in order to restore stability. And that actually went really well without any stress. She also thanked me again and again in the meantime, because she's still working, because of the shift system and so on. And then, well, then.

In my opinion, there was no reason, no further reason, even with the story of the schools attacking the children, so to speak, which was my reason for taking the child out. In the end I said no, because I wasn't going to encourage my child to lie. That was the class teacher's request. And I also talked to her about stories like that. You watch out if any trouble comes. It's just a money game. So it was a misdemeanour at first, then I'll take care of it. You have to and everything was fine. So there was nothing wrong. Yes, and then I can't answer it, because she was involved with the youth welfare office and the school. So the school made the application. But I didn't know that the school was the applicant and that the school was the person with custody. Let's leave it at that. We have our courts. [...] I don't know what happened through the youth welfare office and the school, because to this day I've been denied access to the files and the day I stopped seeing my child, they blocked everything.

So I have no way of answering that at the moment. So before that, yes, there was conflict in inverted commas. But overall. I would say... We were together for over 10 years. Until now, not like that. There was a career change on my part [...] And from there there was a change of character that I noticed in her and which apparently escalated in this form a little later.

[...]

#### **Minute 49**

**Respondent:** I supported her. I was there at the beginning, when the child was born, to be there for her and for the child. Then she wanted to go back to work. Then I stayed at home, stayed at home even longer than necessary. So I actually didn't just take on the 50:50 role, but 60, 70:30, so to speak, so that she could... I don't know. She felt a bit lost so that I could really be there for her. But this role of conflict that you've just mentioned was in the course of the separation. That doesn't mean that I'm blaming it on this gentleman, without exception. I think that there is a lot of potential for conflict from her family, from the past, so to speak, floating around, smouldering, and that it also plays a role with him that he was also a discarded father, so to speak, who was not allowed to see his child, as I said, he became very violent towards me. [...] And yes, that's where the child is now. But the time of conflict... But once the separation was there and the child was with me. There was none. None. I can't say conflict-free. That would be wrong, because I can only assume that when I talk to her and when I ask her. [...] There was a smouldering conflict in some way, but I think it had relatively little to do with our current situation or the situation we were in at the time when our child was there, but that much more would have had to be worked through within the family. But that would have required her to show a willingness to talk about it, because otherwise nothing was closed off.

**Interviewer:** The follow-up question refers to this, whether you think that you or your ex-partner involved your child in such parental conflicts.

**Respondent:** (...) She did. She tended to do that. She tended to do it and she still tends to do it now, because what she's been doing since then is, if I take these statements in anger, like I said, I'll have you killed. So, as I said, it was in connection with her people and so on, but in combination with her family history. So you can't ignore her family history. Is it true that this is now a revenge game? Revenge against me, so to speak, and the whole thing now on the back of the child. Which I find very unfortunate, because as I said. (...) It wasn't my intention, but rather the opposite or rather the opposite, and I was incredibly happy that the child was so stable in his heart again after a quarter of a

year that he was able to talk about it openly with me in bed in the evening and then let his tears run free here and there. When he was told again, I don't know, mum has cancelled again and it makes me sad and mum isn't here or whatever. So these, these spaces, his feelings, really living life. But with her? It's about working through a conflict that lies far, far deeper than it can be reduced to our relationship or to me in any way.

**Interviewer:** And on a scale of 1 to 7, one is the best and seven is the worst. How much conflict protection do you think your child experiences overall? From all sides.

**Respondent:** How should I understand conflict protection now? In this context, conflict protection in the sense that you seriously try to protect him from it or protection in the sense that he develops self-protection, of which you don't know whether personality traits then run in directions that can be described as double, triple, quadruple, because that would also be conflict protection in order not to become vulnerable somewhere. How, how? How should I understand it?

**Interviewer:** Actually the former. To be consciously protected by the parents so as not to actually involve him in these conflicts. What you as a parent or your ex-partner as a parent do to keep him away from it.

**Respondent:** Currently, as far as I'm concerned, or since then, she's not doing anything about it. That's it. She's not doing anything about it. For me, that's absolutely not conflict protection that she's doing. She's forcing the conflict and getting him into big trouble.

**Interviewer:** And how much attention does your child receive overall, both from her and from the mother?

**Respondent:** Erm, well, I don't think there was any affection problem between the two of us. The child had the opportunity to sleep in the big bed. We had a huge bed. So I didn't live it. There's a room that's your bed. They have a big bed and then you just sleep there. And then we sleep together. It was just, it was just a very cuddly child. Even as a baby he was. My child always needed a head, a foot. It had to be touched somewhere to feel comfortable. We did an incredible amount together. We both really enjoyed the so-called lockdown period. I really enjoyed it. (...) I actually also wanted to convey this to her, so to speak, so that she could also get a lot more out of it. In my opinion, she herself has developed as two things. It was already a bit with her children. She had children from her first marriage before that. Either everything was always a bit doll-like, more like a toy, or very distant towards our child, very distant over the course of time, so that I sometimes had moments when I thought about it and wondered whether she really wanted our child. I actually ask myself that in the direction of the mother. Because, as I said, after the separation. She didn't see the child for months at a time, didn't call him, was extremely cold towards him, constantly denied his perception and opinion. When she was there again and came back, she was sometimes very, very, very insecure about how she was treated because the child simply didn't know it from either of us. So it just moved around freely, it moved around freely at home, it used the kitchen, it wasn't forbidden to do anything on my part. So I don't forbid scissors. I teach the child to work with scissors and things like that. The child learnt how to use carving tools relatively quickly because he wanted to. So this, this trust, this really bringing in confidence and not working with the forbidden zones. I don't have to lock up half the flat, but then I teach the child how to handle things from my point of view. And if something is wrong, they shouldn't be ashamed of it or hold back, but talk about it. Then we simply solve it.

## Minute 59

**Test person:** I, I find the relationship very distant and she once said something to the child because the child asked her, because of course I always...You have to learn. You have to talk to mum too. I then discussed this with her individually, that she should also let [child's name] have her say and really get involved on his emotional level, to listen to the child and then it came up again, there was probably the statement from her: [child's name], when you are with me, then I am different to you. I find that quite strange. So in the past, she's either treated like a doll, in other words like a thing. A thing that has to function. That's what she was really about. [...] But what I see, what my impression is, how she does it and continues to do it, is that she sees it as a thing, that it's about a trophy. So at the moment I would also see our child more as a trophy in her direction, the trophy that she has now received. And I'm shot down. I'm out. [...] Our child is a trophy right now. Unfortunately.

**Interviewer:** And does your child currently have any kind of attachment to any attachment figures?

**Respondent:** Not that I know of. So everything that has to do with my side has been broken off from one day to the next.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then I can skip the next question. Um. And you mentioned that, but I'll ask the question again. As a father, do you have or have you had contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts

**Respondent:** Well, as I said, in the course of the, in the course of the separation situation, because of that or by fuelling her boyfriend there was an attempt to experience some violence and thus to bring the circus into our home. But nothing ever happened. I am there. There was no genuine, violent confrontation. So from our side or from my side. [...] In other words, I went to the youth welfare office, but I only wanted it for certain information and possibly as a contact person in the area and not so much involved. However, the employee still confirmed to me that the child would be better off with me at the moment, so to speak, due to the separation situation and to ensure stability and the environment. It was the environment, the daycare centre and then the school. [...] But the same employee, who was then apparently of the opinion that we were simply ripping children out of here. Or support alienation or something like that, so to speak. [...] Whereby a guardian ad litem is not an expert person for me. [...] I also don't need someone who is personally appointed by someone and who is forced to go along with every piece of shit, so to speak, so that he gets more orders. And I can't say that because he never contacted me at any time. They claimed that I had been called or that there was some kind of evidence. The child was with me first. They did, it would have been nice. He didn't contact me or our, me with my child or our child in any way...I can't say anything about him. [...]

### Minute 69

**Interviewer:** So would you first contact these people or recommend them to others or what would you tell other people? To the youth welfare offices, lawyers with whom you had contact during the process?

**Respondent:** [...] And a youth welfare office is currently not recommended by me at all. [...] No, the youth welfare office is not recommended at all, [...]

### Minute 76

**Interviewer:** Perfect. Good, then we were at a standstill. So the last sentence I heard was that youth welfare offices are not to be recommended.

**Respondent:** Not at all. [...]

**Interviewer:** Okay, and then you've already answered the next questions.

Then the next question would be 34. Are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** No. Okay. And how stressful was the separation from your ex-partner

**Respondent:** (...) But the stress, the stress itself was not the separation. Because when the little, I mentioned that she changed jobs beforehand, so to speak, and there was such a change of character [...] there was actually an agreement between us that even if we split up, one thing would happen. Also because of her experience, her separation with her children, that we would actually reassure each other that we would not allow that to happen to us, to the child, so that we would really learn from the experiences we had and not allow it to happen again. In this respect, my problem is not the separation itself, because I think that at that point I had reached an age where I didn't and still don't have a problem with the psychological separation between parents and couples and how to go about it. The stress came more from the, let's say, surprising violence that she allowed herself to be drawn into or that she acted out at that moment. I hadn't expected that and it was very stressful. It was definitely, it was definitely very surprising, very challenging to deal with somehow at that moment.

**Interviewer:** And how do you think the separation was stressful from your child's point of view?

**Test person:** I have to say, I'm surprised. To a certain extent. But it's with a certain amount of caution. It's just a perception now, because you would have had to continue to live somehow, so to speak, (...) that he's coping well in my opinion. So as I said, well, please be careful. I don't know how I feel about it now, but I think that the work and the contact with him and the fact that I never at any time, never at any time spoke against mum or anything else, that it was very helpful to give him back this stability and a happy heart relatively quickly. So the sadness was, as I said, when she didn't get in touch for weeks, (...) but then he talked about it, then he had greater certainty that mum had the key, that she could come in at any time. There was always a lack of understanding, because of course he wanted mum to sleep there all the time and she said, well, you can too. [...]

The question for me now is rather How stable is what I've done? Because he is now in a situation

where he has to return to his dad, so to speak. So this, this form of stability. I don't know about that. But I think we've done well insofar as he's actually clearly formulated what he wants, what he wants. As I said, he wants to be with mum and dad. He wants to decide that. That's why I mentioned that I naturally found this so-called lockdown time very pleasant to try things out. If you can then learn from home and do things accordingly, it would have been better if you hadn't been able to practise and do the whole thing and get used to it. Erm, yes, I don't know how stable it is. But I was surprised that he, that the window of time in which he is already, that is, what many people outside describe, when the anger suddenly boils over or here and there a child explodes quite quickly, so to speak. Yes, of course there are moments, but they were more at the beginning, after the injury, after the sadness, there was an anger phase, but it was still quite short. So it wasn't stopped, but it was my job to catch it in the end and I think we managed it quite well and after that it went more and more evenly until the moment in question. So I found, I found my impression, according to my impression. I rather thought that my child got this torn heart back and it was a healing that was well completed, so that it could or could have brought itself further and further into an ever better stability. And if mum had really gone along with it [...] So if she had gone along with it, then it would have been to the advantage of all three of us, so there would have been no loser.

**Interviewer:** Did you have the feeling that the bond with your child was deliberately disrupted and cut off by your ex-partner?

**Respondent:** I did. I have the impression that she let herself be talked into something. Um, as I said, in combination with things that happened in her family. And it turned into a revenge that was actually deliberately aimed at completely cutting ties. It was about, it was about destruction.

## Minute

**Interviewer:** And from your point of view, were there any other reasons why your ex-partner did this? Apart from revenge

**Interviewer:** Not that I know of. Well, I could make a lot of assumptions. Sure. [...]

As I said, I think there's a lot of family history in there, a lot of things that have to do with her past or with herself. So of course she's caught up in her family again. A bunch of assumptions. It really is a lot of assumptions. It's definitely one thing, this transition phase with the parental leave and the issue of money in any case. Erm.

[...] Maybe I was too inattentive here and there at some points. So that too. It's not a. No pointing the finger in your direction. And I'm the innocent lamb. Not at all. In the relationship. Did it end up being two? Definitely. Well. But when it came to the willingness to argue, she was the one who backed out. Although we made a promise to ourselves that we wouldn't allow our child to experience the many different kinds of things out there, even in our distant circle of acquaintances, where we said we wouldn't offer our children that. We are parents. We will fulfil this emerging task, even if we separate. And we'll do it together.

**Interviewer:** How old was your child at the time of the estrangement process and how long did this process last?

**Interviewer:** It still took a long time. I didn't bring him back in autumn 2021. It was actually only agreed to bring the child home at the weekend. So the weekend with her. And then to clarify what Christmas is like. And then there was only a text message saying that the judge had issued something. Which I didn't have at the time. I asked her to bring the child. I had thought about going there and had also contacted the police. A report was also made ... [...] And since then, contact has been completely broken off. And I considered going there at that moment. Yes and no. Because. And I didn't do it because of this violent side. The one she has there. And she would have had the child with her again. For me, again and again... The problem was, because I couldn't get her into a one-to-one situation. And that was something I hadn't found a way into yet. She also refused all offers to talk to any organisations in the clubs or anything else, to have a conversation without talking about any legal norms and legal principles and so on.

[...] So no response when I write to them. When I write to them via associations. The youth welfare offices refuse files, statements and other things. And as I said, I haven't gone to court yet. Yes, I know I have a duty of contact and so on. [...] And that is, at the moment I don't have one, I don't have a solution yet, apart from trying to resolve it first under administrative law. [...] And in that respect it's difficult right now, because I really want one thing: I don't want someone like you, the mum, to hang around in such a rage. [...]

### Minute 96

**Interviewer:** Have you received any support during all this time? If you don't mind me asking in between. So were you supported in any way, by friends or family?

**Test person:** No, as I said, unfortunately. These friends came about in the course of time. But that's not true about family. Firstly, as I said, my mum, grandma, so the family was already a bit tattered anyway due to illness and deaths and so in the course of time. [...] Friends then emerged in the course of this, when the parents were not yet in situations where the children were immediately away or whatever, but where it was about what was going on at school. [...] And so far, there have been a core of really great mums who are very, very, very committed. Extremely committed. And we are now working together with them accordingly and we are supporting each other so far.

**Interviewer:** How much of a burden is the estrangement from your child at the moment

### Minute 106

**Test person:** Yes, of course. So even if I say I'm fine. That's not a contradiction to saying I'm fine. Of course it's stressful. Firstly, it's stressful because the topic of the discussion child social situation. [...] And of course I miss him, I miss him, I miss him a lot, logically. In the end, they really ruined my existence, which I'm trying to rebuild. That's why I'm glad to have met really new and wonderful people. [...]

And of course I wish I could sit at the table with my mum and (...) Yes. [...]

**Interviewer:** The last question was how the alienation process should be assessed from your child's point of view and how your child perceived the complete alienation

### Minute 117

**Respondent:** (...) Um. (...) Me. That's a bit difficult to answer. So on the one hand, I think that we or I think that there's a good chance of that. The fact that I didn't work against mum means that he feels and has felt just as comfortable with mum. There's no doubt about it, whether it's mum or dad, it would be bad if that wasn't the case on the other side, so to speak, when you're parenting separately. In this respect, there is undoubtedly a certain form of security and that's a good thing! That should also be the case, (...) to what extent the role of the child, I can speak of myself in this respect, [...] Um, I believe that there is definitely, as they say, an adaptability [...] What I think is more likely and would fit in with the development of potential, then I believe that it will undoubtedly manage this well on the one hand and can manage it well, but that it will run through life as unhappily as I did. So it will be a long search if it is not stopped. Erm. In this respect, I would be happy if we could stop this search in... (...) In the way that concerns us all and, as I said, give our, our offspring the opportunity to stop it and finally just help us to feel in inverted commas and to pick up what we have found and make something of it. (...) It's difficult despite everything. I don't know how it will face me. I think my child will be insecure.

### Minute 127

**Respondent:** [...] That's what I heard from another mum, that the child was so insecure that the child was afraid of its own mum. With what you've told them. It could be, of course. The question is, to what extent am I the liar now? To what extent have I lied to my child or perhaps deceived them because I said that we could manage it, which wasn't a problem at the time. [...] I can very well imagine that I might get a good portion of justified anger, that I'll have to endure it [...] Yes, but then I think that when it's out in this anger, I think it's more superficial, so to speak, in the depths, but I still believe it. Or am I already more secure, so to speak. I was there for my child right from the start. I think that maybe you could say that. There are no coincidences. It happened to me that I was at home for over a year, that I was there for her, that I was there for our child, that I spent time alone with the child from the beginning, that we lived alone and built ourselves up. [...]

**Thank you and farewell**

### Minute 137

## 9. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV13

**Note: A third person is present in this interview, labelled with the respondent's partner.**

### **Greeting**

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much in any case. And yes, then I would just start with the first question. Great, how old are you?

**Respondent:** Under 50.

**Interviewer:** And which gender do you feel you belong to? Man, woman, diverse?

**Respondent:** Man.

**Interviewer:** OK, did you grow up in Germany?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, and how would you rate the socio-economic status of your parents' home, i.e. education, occupation, income, on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very low and 7 would be very high.

**Respondent:** 4 to 5.

**Interviewer:** OK, and how would you rate your own socio-economic status, from 1 to 7. 1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest.

**Respondent:** 5.

**Interviewer:** Which, which is your highest qualification to date? We don't have a school-leaving qualification to choose from, lower secondary school, secondary school leaving certificate, bachelor's degree or university of applied sciences, master's degree, diploma or doctorate.

**Respondent:** Well, I have a state examination, which is the same as a university degree.

**Interviewer:** Yes, do you have any siblings?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Half-siblings or siblings?

**Respondent:** Siblings. OK, great.

### **Minute 6**

**Interviewer:** If yes, what age and gender?

**Respondent:** You are older than me.

**Interviewer:** Did your parents stay together until you were of age?

**Respondent:** Yes

**Interviewer:** OK, and your grandparents?

**Respondent:** Also.

**Interviewer:** OK. How is or was your relationship with your mother? A difficult one here was 1 extremely bad and 7 would be excellent.

**Respondent:** 5

**Interviewer:** Why? If I may ask.

**Respondent:** Well, she was there. She took care of me, she looked after me, she looked after me. Yes, so yes.

**Interviewer:** OK and the relationship with her father again from 1 again extremely bad. 7 would be excellent.

**Respondent:** That was around 3 or 4. That was only then, it took a while into adulthood for it to get better.

**Interviewer:** Why? If I may ask.

**Respondent:** Because of his personality structure, there were certain, but how do you say it, Napoleon characteristics, so he was, he could be very controlling and was also unpredictable emotionally.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did you feel emotionally well equipped or prepared for adult life as a result of your experiences at home? Again, we have a scale value so that you can always assess this. 1 would be extremely bad, 7 would be excellent.

**Respondent:** 3.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How do you feel about your mental health? 1 again extremely bad, 7 excellent.

**Respondent:** At most a 4. Ne 4.

**Interviewer:** Okay, did you somehow come into contact with domestic violence that is recognised under criminal law, i.e. did you report it or did the proceedings really go to court, did you somehow come into contact with domestic violence?

**Test person:** Well, not me personally. No, I was never beaten or anything like that.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel in terms of your physical health?

**Respondent:** Good. 6.

**Interviewer:** OK, perfect. Great. Were you or have you been in psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Why and for how long? And perhaps also what diagnosis was made.

**Respondent:** Well, I was in treatment for 3 years for an addiction and I was visiting, so since the separation I've been seeing a psychotherapist to deal with it. In this context, I also saw a psychiatrist a few times to learn to cope with this situation. Exactly.

**Minute 9**

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you have any physical complaints? You said that your health was...

**Respondent:** No, so no, nothing chronic, no.

**Interviewer:** Now we come to your parents' home and what the conflict situation is like there, because of course it's also good for us to be able to assess that. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parents' home? 1 would be very low and 7 would be the highest conflict situation, i.e. that there were a lot of conflicts.

**Respondent:** 4

**Interviewer:** Yes OK, did your parents involve you or your siblings in the parental conflicts?

**Respondent:** Partly yes, the siblings more.

**Interviewer:** And how much would you say 1 was not at all and 7 would be extreme?

**Respondent:** No more than 3.

**Interviewer:** Okay. In what form were they included?

**Respondent:** They were then called in for an interview and then things were discussed with, with, with them. Exactly.

**Interviewer:** OK. How much conflict protection did they experience overall as a child? So how much protection from conflict? 1 would be the highest protection 7 would be very low protection from conflict.

**Respondent:** 5.

**Interviewer:** OK. How much affection did you receive? 1 would be the highest level of affection, 7 would be the lowest.

**Respondent:** 2.

**Interviewer:** OK. And again, how strong is your current attachment to your carers? 1 - The highest level, 7 - the lowest level.

**Respondent:** Who do you mean by attachment figure?

**Interviewer:** That could be their parents, it could be siblings, it could also be friends, in other words the attachment figures that they have, where they share it the most.

**Respondent:** So 1 is the highest.

**Interviewer:** Exactly, 1 would be the highest level.

**Respondent:** 3

**Interviewer:** And also the current contact.

**Respondent:** What do you mean?

**Interviewer:** Well, of course you can have a super close relationship, but sometimes the contact just isn't there, so I'd say that's why we also ask how strong the current contact with the people is, i.e. how often you see each other or talk or something.

**Respondent:** 2

**Interviewer:** Did you ever have contact with family courts or youth welfare offices as a child?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great, now we'll move on to the information about your biological family, about your children. How would you categorise the conflict situation? 1 would be a very low conflict situation, i.e. that there are hardly any conflicts, and 7 would be the highest conflict situation.

**Respondent:** 7.

**Interviewer:** Did you or the other parent involve the children in the parental conflicts? How much would you say 7 is extreme? 1...

**Minute 12**

**Respondent:** So 6. What is extreme? 1 or 7?

**Interviewer:** 7 is extreme.



**Respondent:** 6.

**Interviewer:** In what form?

**Respondent:** The conflicts were dealt with in front of the children, some of the children, especially child 1, were tolerated as adults.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How much conflict protection in general did your children experience, especially if you are now saying that you were very involved in the conflicts, were they kept out of them, that they had protection from conflicts? 1 would be the highest level of protection and 7 would be the lowest level of protection.

**Respondent:** 5 or 6.

**Interviewer:** OK, how strong is your children's current attachment to attachment figures, to their attachment figures?

**Respondent:** With mine?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** Not with mine, not with mine at all. There is no bond at the moment.

**Interviewer:** Ah OK. Have you had contact now as a father, with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers?

**Respondent:** (nods)

**Interviewer:** Yes, in what form?

**Respondent:** Well, after the separation I initially tried to sue for access rights and went to the youth welfare office and then to the family court. I stopped that at some point because there was no prospect of success. And now me and my mum are being sued to the effect that we are no longer allowed to have any contact at all.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe this relationship with the experts or lawyers or family courts? Was it helpful for you, quasi friendly, was it supportive or rather insensitive, unfriendly?

**Respondent:** Indifferent and one has and...indifferent and taking sides. Exactly, you have it, so you have it, so you have it. The subject of alienation was never actually mentioned, it was always brushed off, especially by the youth welfare office.

**Interviewer:** So I can already hear that. You can't recommend the help.

**Respondent:** No

**Interviewer:** Yes, would you have any other advice in a similar situation that you have noticed? That would be helpful or something you would have liked?

**Respondent:** So maybe helpful for others who would be in my situation. My biggest piece of advice is not to leave the house. Not if you, if a marriage breaks down or a relationship breaks down, always stay with the children. Don't leave the children to the other parent, stay with the children if at all possible, don't move out.

**Interviewer:** OK, are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Minute 15**

**Respondent:** Yes

**Interviewer:** If yes, would you describe the relationship as supportive and empowering? Scale also from 1 the highest and 7 the lowest

**Respondent:** 1.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how stressful was the separation for you, 1 the lowest stress level 7 the highest stress.

**Respondent:** It was 7 so it was....

**Interviewer:** Oh why, if I may ask.

**Respondent:** On the one hand, it was the powerlessness, on the other hand, it was seeing what was happening and not being able to do anything about it. And then it was also mentally incredibly stressful. I had hallucinations at night, sometimes from my children. And it just brought me to the edge. So the separation from the children. Separating from my ex-partner was very liberating.

**Interviewer:** OK, it's also good for us to know that we were actually asked the next question, why the separation was for your children and how stressful you think the separation was for your children. One would be very low here and 7 would of course be the highest again.

**Respondent:** Well, I'm not looking in, I have it. I haven't actually had any contact for three and a half years. I think that it lies dormant in secret, that is, if you look at the current situation, i.e. what I hear from caregivers such as teachers or the like, they are all doing quite well, they encapsulate the issue, so I would give it a 3 or 4 on the outside at most. But when I look at the inside of my children, I think it's

more like a 5 or a 6, because there's just this unresolved conflict somewhere inside that's not being dealt with.

**Interviewer:** You said that you haven't had good contact with your children for three and a half years now. What do you think were the motives of the other parent that led to this, so to speak?

**Test person:** So a big hurt on the couple level. And a feeling of having to protect the children and a clear friend-enemy mentality.

**Interviewer:** OK. And what do you think were the factors that led to this? So did this situation have an even greater influence on the fact that it really did lead to alienation?

**Respondent:** On the one hand, the request was the personality, yes exactly, the personality of my ex-wife and that of her father, the grandfather of the children.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How old were your children when you separated? How long did the process take?

**Minute 18**

**Proband:** It's been 3 years now. So in spring 2020, child 1 was under 15, child 2 was under 10 and child 3 was over 5.

**Interviewer:** OK. And now, for three and a half years, the process has been going on, so to speak, when...

**Respondent:** So no, yes, the alienation process. Yes, I withdrew my application for contact in the winter of 2022 and the new process has been running since autumn.

**Interviewer:** Okay. What are the consequences...

**Respondent's partner:** - Is it okay if I always think of something to add to the law in a neutral way?

**Interviewer:** Of course!

**Respondent's partner::** So you kept saying to me that the estrangement started before the separation.

**Respondent:** That's right, mhm. So the last, the last half, three quarters of a year before, my ex-wife had already taken the children.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** OK, what consequences did the alienation process have for you, for the children too, perhaps for the other parent and for the family as a whole? I think you and your mother are also being sued somehow?

**Respondent:** Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Exactly, then I assume that this also has consequences for your family, your mother?

What consequences did the whole thing, the whole process have for everyone in that area?

**Interviewee:** Well, for the children it had the effect of putting them in an incredibly powerful position.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Interviewee:** For my ex-wife, it meant that she was able to generate and present herself as a protector and victim, practically the brave single parent who gets the children to do well at school. And, and, and. And having to defend herself all the time. It was like that for me, no. For my mum, it was like that, she just lost contact with her three grandchildren from one day to the next and ended up in the role of a supplicant, especially with the other parents-in-law. In other words, the grandparents of the children on her mother's side... also here... are facing this, this complaint that she should practically be forbidden to write postcards or call here at all. For me, for me, the role is that I am a free person, simply because of the end of the relationship, to express myself. So I can be myself and the role of the person who somehow tries to see the children, but is stigmatised and criminalised in the process.

**Interviewer:** Did you receive any support, let's say, from people you know, from carers or also somehow, of course, from other...? We had experts, lawyers, there are also associations or something like that, did you receive any support in the situation?

**Test person:** Well, I received a lot of support and encouragement from my personal context. I once went to the VAFK, an association for single parents and so on. I also got to know a few other fathers. I also know an acquaintance, i.e. at least one father in my circle of acquaintances who feels the same way as I do.

I didn't receive any support from the authorities, on the contrary, it was the case, for example, that at first, as I said, the estrangement was denied and then after a good year they said, yes, now the

estrangement is there, now we can see it, but it's already so far advanced, there's nothing we can do. The guardian ad litem was horribly good. My lawyer did everything she could at the time, but the biggest support was actually the judge. When I called him, he said that I wanted to withdraw the application after the other side had already filed one. According to the Protection against Violence Act, to keep a distance and so on, so he ended the proceedings.

**Minute 22**

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** But otherwise I just looked for therapeutic help, yes.

**Interviewer:** What other help would you have liked?

**Respondent:** Perhaps add .... very briefly. Well, I don't know if you know Anna Pelz, she's a woman who does a lot of work on parent-child issues, so we got in touch with her, or we got in touch with her, so we practically looked on the Internet to see who was dealing with the issue. What I would have liked to see is a youth welfare office that recognises that there is parent-child alienation. A head of authority, a district administrator, who recognises that this exists and doesn't tell me in a conversation against mothers. So we don't touch mothers at all. In the sense that we don't make any announcements, nothing, so simply that it is recognised that a mother who is now a single parent is making a significant contribution to the situation as it is. So simply recognition.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I understand that.

**Respondent:** And also appropriate action in the end. Because sometimes you have to say, "No, it can't be done like that. You can't do it like that, yes, it's not happening."

**Interviewer:** Yes. Do you still have contact with your ex-wife, with your children? You said that you no longer have any contact with your children and your ex-wife.

**Respondent:** Well, I get a report once a month and it says that the children are doing well, they are developing according to their age. They probably don't want any contact with me and any attempt at contact is a threat to the children's welfare.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that a reunion like this could be on the cards at some point?

**Respondent:** With my children?

**Interviewer:** Exactly, with your children.

**Respondent:** Maybe when they are grown up and out of the household. But I have very little hope in terms of expectation management.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How stressful was the alienation for you? You said it was already starting, even before the separation. 1 would be the lowest level, 7 the highest.

**Respondent:** Well, I would almost put it at 7, so yes.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Respondent:** Because it tears your heart out. Because a part of you is then gone. Because everything is negated, so I was... Child 1 was under 15 at the time, so I accompanied [number of years of child 1's life] as a normal father for a long time. The same with child 2 and child 3.

**Interviewer:** How stressful do you think the estrangement is for your children?

**Respondent:** Then I would differentiate between what is their everyday life and what is dormant. So in terms of what is worse, I can see what might come out at some point, I would give it a 6. Actually, yes and in everyday life maybe a 3 or a 4, because it's just negated.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Respondent:** Exactly.

**Minute 27**

**Interviewer:** OK. I actually have one more question, then the questions are already over, I'll say. You said that the process started before the separation, so to speak. In what way were you able to recognise that?

**Test person:** For example, that child 3, who I had put to bed almost every night up until then, was drawn more towards me by my ex-wife. That that or child 1 had already moved away a bit. Then child 3 had already taken over my role. Exactly.

**Interviewer:** I didn't understand it acoustically.

**Respondent:** Well, that he has already been assigned my role.

**Interviewer:** Ah OK, yes.

**Respondent:** In the last nine months, gradually.

**Interviewer:** OK, so you could also say that it was really a process that was forced and not an alienation, I would say from one day to the next.

**Respondent:** Well, this cut was quite brutal. After the day we broke up, we tried a few meetings. Then they were all immediately totally hostile, all the children from one day to the next, but...

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** This bringing the children here, bringing them closer to my ex-wife, that started nine months earlier and this cut, that really happened from one day to the next.

**Interviewer:** Ok. Okay. I don't really have any questions, they were all the ones we ask. Do you have any questions?

[...]

**Respondent:** OK.

**Interviewer:** Exactly.

**Respondent's partner:** I'm just thinking about it now. I'm just wondering if I can think of anything else or if I have a question. So what comes to my mind spontaneously is actually. I got to know him after the break-up (laughs). Exactly. We got to know each other later and so we got to experience what was happening. So it's really not easy for people or for me now, for example. I think that's another really important point. And I really experience it as an absolutely sick system. What happens to the children. [...] Yes and yes, it's just this manipulability and that can take place on such an emotional level. So this really psychological abuse that takes place and this looking away from friends, acquaintances, who were also there together. So from mutual friends [...] And then also this from all the authorities, youth welfare offices. [...] So I do experience this, of course, when you are involved in such high-conflict situations as a counsellor and are supposed to mediate, that is, when you have no means of dealing with it, i.e. from the youth welfare office now, that the youth welfare office cannot say that you are endangering the child's welfare if you prevent this contact in this way, so it must obviously have been actively prevented by her, she was, for example, at the accompanied visits that...

**Minute 31**

**Respondent:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Respondent's partner:** My partner had her, she always came with me on the accompanied visits, she was always in the room with me and put up a front, so she pulled herself out a bit, sat a bit apart, but her attitude was non-verbal, whatever was there somehow... so it was totally counterproductive. The accompanying professional or volunteer who was there didn't question that.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent's partner:** That now that the mother can go in there or not, yes, that was then said, otherwise the children won't go in there either, so to speak. That was a front. And she controlled it from behind, if you want to look at it that way. Or is my hypothesis also controlled to a certain extent [...] And there is no, no leverage, yes.

**Test person:** So there would be.

**Respondent's partner:** But it's not used. Exactly, so this endangerment of the child's welfare, psychological abuse or this, what's the name of the paragraph? So the welfare, that both parents have a...

**Respondent:** .... have a duty to maintain a high level of behaviour.

**Respondent's partner:** Obligation to maintain a high standard of behaviour, yes. So that's not an issue at all yes and...

**Respondent:** And I might have to add, I've often written to the youth welfare office and they just say: "Yes, we have discretionary powers. We don't do anything well." And I already know how it is with discretion, but I can also read the relevant paragraphs and now I also know if there are indications that the child's welfare is at risk, then something actually has to be done. But nothing happens and they fall back on this attitude that the parents should get along, we, we support them a bit, but otherwise we stay completely out of it.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent's partner:** And what I also mean when I take on the role of the children or simply from my experience. The children have never had the opportunity or it is always interpreted differently. They've never had the opportunity..., no opportunity to be sad that their parents have separated and that's a hypothesis or an assumption of mine. Just the grieving process, which is also quite normal. Yes, it's sad when the parents no longer live together, it's always suppressed or shifted to the father's side, that he's responsible for it. And it's also somehow become a bit of an issue now with these new court proceedings. The children have psychosomatic complaints.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

### Minute 35

**Respondent's partner:** I think that's also very important, so they would have nausea and stomach ache and just yes, symptoms like that, fear. The children express panic fear.

**Test person:** Fear of me, exactly.

**Respondent's partner:** If you saw him from a distance, it was nothing. Yes, so that has now, so much fear has been generated.

**Test person:** It has nothing to do with real life so far.

**Respondent's partner:** But it's nothing to do with what was experienced in real life, in the relationship, where he still saw the children. For me, such stress reactions to this whole unprocessed topic.

**Test person:** Well, I, I couldn't, I couldn't explain myself yet. I couldn't explain myself at any point. So I haven't been able to explain to my children for three and a half years, that was the separation, those were the reasons for the separation. I'm still your dad, everything is blocked and the youth welfare office won't go into it.

**Interviewer:** Mhm, Mhm.

**Respondent's partner:** No one has ever really spoken to the children on their own...

**Respondent:** Over three and a half years, yes.

**Respondent's partner:** So also from those involved. And the father, he's never had the opportunity since then to simply say something about himself from his own perspective. They see everything, they only see everything through the eyes of their mother, father and grandfather. Exactly, who, in my opinion, plays a decisive role. And then ... would also be important to me - and, um, and she clearly has a lot of fears, based on reports, and I can see that there is a share, an accentuated personality behind it, or what she brings with her. And I have the idea that with this separation, which was absolutely unimaginable for her, that this character trait was massively reinforced.

**Test person:** And she practically transferred her fears to the children, to and onto the children, and they are now afraid of me. And I've really talked about all of this at length to the youth welfare office, to the guardian ad litem, and it's simply not taken note of.

**Respondent's partner:** The fact that the grandparents or grandfather also played a big role in this was never of interest. So it wasn't really looked at systemically either.

**Interviewer:** I actually have a question about that, although it's not part of the study, but it's not always the case, especially if your children were already teenagers when the separation happened. Didn't the court or something say to the children, even you, that there was never anything done with the children, your will, welfare, so to speak.

**Respondent:** So there was no talk with the children, no, not even from the court.

### Minute 38

**Interviewer:** Okay, because they are already in an everyday life, especially in adolescence, where they are already, especially later, from the age of 14 or so, I think they can already make their own decisions and things like that, legally. And I would have assumed that from then on you could at least ask the children. They are just OK.

**Respondent:** That's not the case, that didn't happen. And I'm curious to see if that happens in the current process, but then it will be the case that they say quite clearly that they don't want any contact with me. No contact and then it will be the same again, then it will be the same again, then it will be the same again and they will say, but alienation, alienation, alienation, that's manipulated will. And then you just have to see if anyone is interested in the fact that it's a manipulated will.

**Respondent's partner:** Yes, well, I suspect that the judge, who also takes over, I think that there's also a bit of, well, maybe you're lucky, but I don't think they're trained at all. So really listening to these points. When a child speaks, and there are already clear characteristics or criteria that you can listen to, and I simply believe that there is a lack of training in this area. And maybe judges too, without wanting to insinuate anything. It all has to be done quickly, quickly, or yes, and then perhaps simply face up to the issue. What are you supposed to do? What should you do somehow?

**Interviewer:** Exactly, exactly, yes, yes, thank you very much. In any case, do you have any further questions? That's super, super much input for me too, thank you very much for sharing that. And also that you shared it again independently of the questions. Yes, to get such an insight, because that's also clear, of course. So thank you very much in any case.

**Test person:** With pleasure

**Respondent's partner:** Thank you too.

**Farewell**

**Minute 43**

**10. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV16**

**Greeting**

**Respondent:** No problem. There is only one thing, there was the issue of domestic violence, yes, should we provide information? In my case, my ex-partner attacked me. Yes, but it wasn't prosecuted in any way. We came to terms with the situation.

**Interviewer:** Did you report it to the police?

**Respondent:** Under criminal law, yes, but it was then no longer pursued on the recommendation of the youth welfare office. Okay, but it wasn't pursued any further. So it was then stopped.

**Interviewer:** Yes, well, then we'll just carry on with the interview. [...]

**Respondent:** So it was not continued, so there was no conviction, no nothing. But even then. Yes, everything just went badly. It also happens the other way round. I think it happened on both sides.

**Interviewer:** Yes, it shouldn't happen at all.

**Respondent:** Exactly, it's just a clear overstepping of boundaries. Good, okay.

**Interviewer:** [...] So, first question: How old are you?

**Respondent:** Over 40.

**Interviewer:** And which gender do you feel you belong to?

**Respondent:** Yes, I do. Male? Yes.

**Interviewer:** Did you grow up in Germany or do you have a migrant background?

**Respondent:** I have a migrant background and have been in Germany since the tender age of three months.

**Interviewer:** Yes, from both parents on your mother's side, on your father's side?

**Respondent:** Both are of southern European origin.

**Interviewer:** All right. So, then. How would you categorise the socio-economic status of your parents' home? That is, the question here is. Education, income, occupation. One is very low, two is below average, three is slightly below average, four is average, five is slightly above average, six is above average and seven is the highest status.

**Respondent:** Good, so perhaps in terms of concretisation. What do you mean by family status? So all family members or my parents or myself?

**Interviewer:** In relation to the parents?

**Respondent:** I would say above average.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so about a six.

**Respondent:** Between four and five. So, what was five again?

**Interviewer:** Five is slightly above average.

**Respondent:** And what's six?

**Interviewer:** Above average.

**Respondent:** Yes, I know the figures from the Federal Statistical Office, so above average.

**Interviewer:** Then we'll just enter that as a solid six. How would you describe your own socio-economic status? The scale is the same. So one is again very low, seven is again the highest.

**Respondent:** Well. (4) Slightly above average. But that is linked to the costs, so socio-economic status. You can earn €100,000 but have expenses of €80,000, so you only have €20,000 left over, which is slightly above average.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what is your highest degree to date?

**Respondent:** Er. I have a diploma, I have.

**Interviewer:** All right. Do you have any siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** I have three siblings.

**Interviewer:** Yes. And what age are they?

**Minute 5**

**Respondent:** They're all younger.

**Interviewer:** All right. Did your parents stay together until you were of age? Yes. Are they still together?

**Respondent:** Dad has passed away.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (..) Like that? How would you describe your relationship with your mum? One would be extremely bad and seven is excellent.

**Respondent:** Who says excellent. (...) So I would say between five and six.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so so good, very good. (..) And how would you describe your relationship with your father?

**Respondent:** Dad died over 15 years ago, but a different age. Also five, six, so five, five to six.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So the experiences in your parental home make you feel emotionally prepared or equipped for adult life? One is that they feel very emotionally ill-equipped, extremely ill-equipped. And seven is - they were excellent.

**Respondent:** Six.

**Interviewer:** Six? All right.

**Respondent:** Not seven.

**Interviewer:** So, now we come to questions about your health. How do you feel about your mental health? One is extremely bad, seven is excellent.

**Respondent:** Do you mean before the whole thing started with the parents?

**Interviewer:** Now in general?

**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. So. Between four and five.

**Interviewer:** All right? And what about your physical health?

**Test person:** Oh, I try to do sport regularly, but I used to be a competitive athlete compared to now. It's a different standard now. Seven is excellent, between four and five here too. Okay.

**Interviewer:** So are you or were you undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** No. (...) I have during. (...) When it was once again in the hot phase of the conflict and the custody, i.e. custody and contact proceedings. I had two or three hours of professional counselling, just to talk about it, about the situation, if that applies and the request. Yes, that's what I did, okay.

**Interviewer:** But nothing where any diagnosis was made?

**Test person:** But nothing permanent. So not with any kind of diagnosis, depression or psychiatric illnesses that require therapeutic treatment over a longer period of time. No, that wasn't the case. That was situationally high stress. And then it's good to talk to professionals about how to deal with the situation.

**Interviewer:** Okay, do you currently have any severe physical complaints?

**Test person:** No.

#### **Minute 8**

**Interviewer:** I knock on wood. (...) So, how would you categorise the conflict situation in your parental home? One would be, there was hardly any conflict at all. And seven was That was my parents' highest conflict situation.

**Respondent:** Well, I had a great home, so Dad, Mum, that was all a bit longer ago. I'm already over 40, by that you mean mum and dad. Exactly. They really did a great job of never broadcasting or arguing anything in front of the children. I've maybe heard something from mum two or three times. So I'd go between one and two.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, the next question would have been about how much you witnessed as a child. But you just said that if you did, then only unconsciously.

**Respondent:** No, I think I realised twice that my parents argued two or three times. So they sorted it all out between themselves. Okay, so we didn't notice anything as children.

**Interviewer:** So the next question would be how much conflict protection you experienced as a child. One would be you experienced the highest level of conflict protection and seven would be you experienced none at all and the way you describe it.

**Respondent:** We can also choose between one and two... one Yes, okay, one, but I know. So as I said, I only heard about it two or three times.

**Interviewer:** All right. Would we categorise between one and two? Like this? How much affection did you receive as a child? One would be you experienced the highest level of affection and seven. You experienced very low levels of affection.

**Test person:** Well, I would too. So a healthy amount of affection. Do you mean attention or physical closeness? Hugs? Well, I was a child, a competitive athlete. My parents were always there and supported me in everything. Yes, and when I wanted a hug, they gave me one too. But not in abundance now either. So how? Where is the benchmark? Two, three?

**Interviewer:** Yes, just as you would have wished. If that's in your eye, that's according to your own standards. As it was sufficient for you. And if you say that it was absolutely sufficient for you.

**Minute 11**

**Proband:** Absolutely sufficient. Yes.

**Interviewer:** And how strong is your current bond with your attachment figures? That could be parents, friends, other family members. One is you have the highest level of attachment and seven is very low.

**Respondent:** Yes, I have a great relationship with my attachment figures. So I can knock on the door of my siblings and mum at any time and they are there and vice versa.

**Interviewer:** Would you describe that as the highest level or rather as above average?

**Test person:** So the highest level would be one to two, something between one and two. I'm really lucky that I have friends and family. That's already a luxury problem.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and how much contact do you currently have with these people? One is again the highest, seven the lowest.

**Respondent:** Yes, we all live in the same town, a few streets next to each other. So we have regular contact.

**Interviewer:** Okay. As a child, do you have or did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers?

**Respondent:** No, fortunately not.

**Interviewer:** So, then I can skip a few questions. Good, then we'll actually come to your family with the estranged children. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your own family? One is not a conflict situation at all and seven was a very strong conflict situation.

**Respondent:** Seven

**Minute 13**

**Interviewer:** Okay. (...) Ahh, did you or the other parent involve the children in the conflict, in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** No, not me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how would you estimate this for the other parent?

**Respondent:** Six to seven.

**Interviewer:** So very strongly. Yes. Okay.

**Respondent:** Well, yes. Do five to, to six. Times 5 to 6.

**Interviewer:** And how much conflict protection have your children experienced overall? One is the highest level of conflict protection and seven is nothing. Okay, so an even seven.

**Respondent:** A pure disaster.

**Interviewer:** How much attention did your children receive overall? One is the highest, seven the lowest.

**Respondent:** Well, I can only talk about myself. So they get a lot from me. 1 to 2. (...) Well, I have to say, I don't have that much time with my little one.

**Interviewer:** And how strong is the current bond between your children and their carers? If you can assess that? One would be you have the strongest.

**Respondent:** Attachment security, I guess, I can't assess it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then we'll skip that one.

**Respondent:** Me. We have a handover that lasts one minute. So a few seconds and that's it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That means you also don't know what the current contact with certain attachment figures is like for your children?

**Respondent:** No, not at all. Our child is separated from both parents. Good, always goes to the others. I can't assess it in terms of happiness or anything else. I can't rate it. Okay, then I would have to evaluate statements from my child. That would be wrong.

**Interviewer:** Did you or did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts etc. when you were already a father?

**Respondent:** Only with my current child, so only in these proceedings, not before.

**Minute 15**

**Interviewer:** Yes, with the courts or with youth welfare offices.

**Respondent:** So with my current ex-partner, my ex and my child. I only have one child and there was nothing like that before. That's....

**Interviewer:** Okay.



**Respondent:** That's why the question before this relationship refers to whether I have anything to do.

**Interviewer:** As a father, so just with the family.

**Respondent:** So with the family. It happened when our child was just a few months old.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Can you go into more detail about how it all came about?

**Respondent:** Yes, of course I can. I can tell you. Well, during. We lived together and she kept having impulses and losing control, where she just couldn't control herself any more. And at some point I said that was enough. (...) Our child is also being harmed here. And then she packed her things and basically moved hundreds of kilometres away.

**Interviewer:** And took the child with her?

**Respondent:** And took it with her. Okay. (...) You're already swallowing. You can feel the energy. Yes, me. I'm trying to, I'm trying to....If you're not in this scene yourself, then you don't believe it. What happens there.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And did you receive any kind of support? Also from lawyers or the courts, right?

**Test person:** I have to get a lawyer. Yes, support. Not every child is small. So that can be put. That took a bit of time. Yes, then a child can move away, look down the tube.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe the relationship with the lawyer or in general as being helpful or supportive?

**Test person:** Absolutely. Well, it always depends on who you end up with. My first lawyer, i.e. the relationship, is a super nice woman, but she comes up against professional limits, which she then admits herself. I'm overwhelmed with the case here and also with the remaining assets that I now have. Super human and professionally 1 A.

**Minute 17**

**Interviewer:** Yes, would you use such professionals again or recommend them to others?

**Respondent:** So in the, in the. I come from the legal system myself and have been able to talk to a few, family law too, over the years. Do you also acquire knowledge? Oh, quite dangerous. You can't really recommend just anyone. And you mustn't forget that lawyers like to argue. (...) So I'm careful with the recommendations. [...]

**Interviewer:** Hm. And what would you say worked in your relationship or did you have any advice on how things could have gone better?

**Respondent:** In the relationship between whom?

**Interviewer:** The best way was with your ex-wife and then the relationship with the whole legal system, with the lawyers. Simply a complete process.

**Respondent:** With my ex-partner. We could have had support, but she refused any support. (...) And you can't force anyone to take part in parental regulation meetings. Or parenting consensus or peace talks. If they don't want to, that's just the way it is! [18:47:00]

**Minute 18**

**Interviewer:** All right And are you currently in a new, stable relationship?

**Respondent:** Yes, I tried that at first, but not at the moment. So the question is. No. Okay.

**Interviewer:** How stressful is or was the separation for you? One, it wasn't stressful at all and seven, it was very stressful.

**Respondent:** Specify separation from ex-partner, separation from my child? Separation from ex-partner zero.

**Interviewer:** Okay, can you go into more detail about why?

**Respondent:** She moved away?

**Interviewer:** Well, it makes sense, but can you go into more detail about why? Can you go into more detail about why you feel that way?

**Respondent:** Because physical assault crosses a boundary. That no longer makes a relationship possible. You put up with it once, but if it becomes permanent, then it's better to flee. Yes. Pregnancy hormones are all good. We looked at that for a while. (...) But at some point it was too much.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so how stressful do you think the separation was for your child? One would be....

**Respondent:** So seven is the highest level? Seven, it was very stressful. Very intense. [...] The problem of why a new relationship also failed at some point? Yes, but we'll probably get to that too with sexuality and stuff like that. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Then so, we're coming to the final spurt. (...) So you have the feeling that the bond with your child has been deliberately disrupted or cut off by the other parent.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Which are objectively...?

**Respondent:** Several kilometres is a distance. Yes.

**Interviewer:** And what would you say were the other parent's motives for doing that?

**Respondent:** I left you. She told me that. And I'll do anything to make sure you don't see your child again. Emotional reasons.

**Interviewer:** Erm. What would you say? How did this situation come about and what factors may have influenced the way it turned out?

**Respondent:** Hm. Now the question is what led to her refusing to have contact with me, with my child, because of the separation?

**Interviewer:** Yes, as I said, it's all very open with you. So the questions are very obvious with you. So with a couple, you can really refer back to the beginnings of the relationship and how it developed in the parental home.

**Test person:** And a separation is of course also an emotional one, i.e. when feelings are no longer there or when someone no longer feels seen or valued and the other person is, but still wants to force it and then it just doesn't work. So on the whole, it's an emotional thing. Yes.

**Minute 23**

**Interviewer:** How old was your child when this all started? And how long did this process take in total? Or is it still going on?

**Respondent:** A few months, then. And it's still going on today? Yes.

**Interviewer:** How old is your child today?

**Respondent:** Under 5.

**Interviewer:** So, what consequences did it have for your child that you are now estranged from him?

**Respondent:** Well, the child no longer has the opportunity. (...) to receive love, affection and attention from both parents in the same quantity. The distance, the willingness on the part of the mother to make more visits possible is there. Emotionality is lost, life experience is lost, quality time is lost.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there were also consequences for your ex-wife, whether positive or negative, that she became estranged from you and took the child with her?

**Minute 25**

**Test person:** But you have to look inside her head. So I think there should be some kind of consequences or reactions in every person, where they categorise it for themselves. So, I've shown the arse, I'm happy or I'm... Well, actually, there's no need for a counterstatement, because if you're not happy, i.e. you're not happy that the child and father or others are spending time together, then you'll also work against it. (...) So I would say she's very happy about it, because she continues to make life miserable.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Erm. Have you experienced any kind of support during all this time?

**Test person:** Oh, there, from friends and acquaintances. So I was me. Very big cinema. Seven. (...) From the closed circle.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** So not from the state authorities. So not from the social system or family system.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** So without a stable environment, and they have to have stability, but without family, friends and acquaintances, no chance. There are other cases who have also tried to take their own lives. And so on and so forth. Or give up?

**Interviewer:** Do you still have any form of contact with your ex-wife?

**Respondent:** Yes, by email. Just organisational things.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And any kind of contact with your own child?

**Respondent:** Yes, I see him regularly every fortnight.

**Interviewer:** Could you imagine some kind of reunion with your child or is there anything possible in the near future?

**Respondent:** So reunification in the sense of spending more time with the child.

**Interviewer:** Yes, so also with co-parenting. Perhaps so that you simply have the child with you more regularly?

**Minute 27**

**Test person:** Of course, if you didn't have the hope... I don't think so, then you don't do it. In any

case, so hope is very high. I try to approach things positively.

**Interviewer:** And how stressful was the estrangement for you? One - It didn't bother her at all and seven - It bothered her a lot.

**Respondent:** Which is very much? Very strongly. Six, 6 to 7.

**Interviewer:** Yes. It's a bit self-explanatory, but can you go into more detail about why that is?

**Respondent:** Oh, that. (...) Well, I have to ask you a quick question. Do you have children?

*Interviewer answers the question about children in the negative.*

**Test person:** I wouldn't have thought that having children myself would be a feeling. Now I'm getting wee-wee in my eyes. Erm. Feeling developed. And this feeling. And, um. (...) A part of them. Is torn away from them. (...) And they are powerless. And do nothing. So powerless. Sure. (...) Then a part breaks.

**Interviewer:** That's all very well, and then we actually have the last question. (...) Did you notice a kind of alienation process with your child? Did you realise more and more, or was it very rapid? How would you describe it?

**Test person:** Such a process is always ongoing. (...) My child was also very, very small. So these processes are also caused by that. (...) Let me put it this way, your children don't have your handwriting. They are biologically yours, but they can only pass on a little. (...) And that's why they see the process on an ongoing basis and try to maintain the bond and emotional stability and compensate as much as possible with as little as possible. But there is a difference between raising a child continuously in your own household. (...) Or like an uncle every leap year. So you always have to come closer and look and see until something happens sometimes. (...) You try to get it together as best you can.

**Interviewer:** All right. Good. That was actually the last question. Then we're done. We are actually finished.

**Respondent:** That's very nice feedback.

**Minute 30**

**Interviewer:** Then I would stop the recordings now.

## 11. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV20

### Greeting

**Interviewer:** Well, let's start straight away. How old are you?

**Respondent:** Under 50.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And which gender do you feel you belong to?

**Respondent:** Man, man.

**Interviewer:** And you grew up in Germany.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Do you have a migration background?

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, then we come to a question where you have to make a categorisation. It's about the socio-economic status of your parental home. That means education, income and occupation. One stands for very low status. Four would be medium, average and seven is the highest status. Where would you rate that approximately? From 1 to 7.

**Respondent:** (...) Mother housewife. I would say almost four.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how would you rate the father?

**Respondent:** (...) Oh, with mum and dad. I have just now. He finally grew up. Also.

**Interviewer:** So both of them. Would you categorise means?

**Test person:** Yes. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how would you categorise your own socio-economic status on the same scale?

**Respondent:** (...) Yes, even with a four.

**Interviewer:** All right. What is your highest qualification to date?

**Respondent:** I can't say exactly. But I would say the last one now is a Bachelor's degree

**Interviewer:** Do you have any siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** Four older siblings.

### Minute 3

**Interviewer:** All right. Did your parents stay together until you reached the age of majority?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** That's the next question. How would you rate your relationship with your mother? One is extremely bad. 4 is average. 7 is excellent.

**Respondent:** Average.

**Interviewer:** And with your father?

**Respondent:** (...) Five.

**Interviewer:** Erm. It is precisely because of the experience in your parental home that you feel emotionally equipped and prepared for adult life. One is again extremely bad. 4 is average and 7 is excellent.

**Respondent:** I feel emotionally unprepared with a 4,3,4.

**Interviewer:** So rather, rather in the below-average range. Okay. How would you describe your mental health? One Extremely poor again. Four again average, seven excellent.

**Respondent:** I'm currently in rehab for my mental health.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that is.

**Respondent:** But one.

**Interviewer:** One. Okay. And physical health?

**Respondent:** If I did more sport. I would say 4.

**Interviewer:** All right. But you say you're currently in rehab. Have you had any other psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** I had depression in between and suffer from parent-child alienation. Post-traumatic stress disorder. I was in a day clinic for a fortnight and had to stop because I preferred childcare.

**Interviewer:** Hm. And do you have any severe physical complaints?

**Respondent:** In the questionnaire I answered that I sometimes have neck pain, back pain and shoulder pain. The stress affects my stomach. I have nausea and vomiting when it gets too extreme. Sometimes diarrhoea, (...) sleep disorders, concentration problems. I filled everything out nicely in the questionnaire, but I saw afterwards that I had filled it out twice, but that doesn't matter.

**Interviewer:** Nope, better one too many than one too few. Just like that. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parental home? One would be - There was no conflict situation at all. Four average and seven was - There were extremely many conflict situations.

**Respondent:** Seven.

**Interviewer:** And did your parents involve you in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** Oh, parental conflicts. I have to say. It was more like that. Six. And, um. Involved? No, but you have to be aware of it. Okay. My parents were both [in social work] and they already had some idea of how to work pedagogically. But with five children, that was sometimes forgotten.

### Minute 7

**Interviewer:** Okay, yes, there is a scale here, practically or unconsciously. In other words, you would rather categorise it as one where you have noticed it, but not consciously exposed to it, where it...

**Respondent:** Practically, exactly exactly.

**Interviewer:** That would be the next question. That comes very close to how much conflict protection they received as a child. That is, for one, the parents made a great effort to protect them from conflict and for seven, they made no effort at all to protect them from conflict.

**Respondent:** That was a six.

**Interviewer:** All right. And how much affection did you receive as a child? One is you received an extreme amount of affection and seven is you received no affection at all.

**Respondent:** (...) It's been such a long time. (...) I would say moderately, the way it was with five children.

**Interviewer:** Would you describe it more as below average or average?

**Respondent:** 2 to 3, exactly.

**Interviewer:** All right? And how strong is your current bond with your attachment figures? Can this be your parents, friends or other family members, partners of the same? One would be you have the highest level of attachment. Seven would be you have no attachment level at all.

**Respondent:** A 1 to 2 would be my partner. And 5 to 6, sometimes even seven with siblings and family.

**Interviewer:** And how much contact do you currently have with these attachment figures?

**Respondent:** With my partner, almost every day or several times a day. And with the others when I need help or something else comes up. Or. Well, my partner has more contact with my family than I do.

**Interviewer:** The tenor is clear, six or seven. As a child, do you have or did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts?

**Respondent:** No, no, no, no.

**Interviewer:** Hm, then I can skip the next question. (...) Okay, then let's move on to your family. With the, with your own children, i.e. outside your parental home. How would you categorise the conflict situation with your family? One is no conflicts at all. Seven is extremely many conflicts.

### Minute 10

**Respondent:** Seven - extremely many conflicts began with the birth of child 1.

**Interviewer:** Did you or the other parent involve the children in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** It really escalated.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so also a seven. Can you describe how that happened? You are welcome to go into more detail.

**Respondent:** I would like to describe that. And... (...) Essentially because there was no mutual understanding of independence and letting go of the parental home. I wanted to be more detached and freer from her parental home and she couldn't do it. She [ex-partner] is also a few years younger than me. (...)

*Connection problems*

**Interviewer:** Okay, then I'll briefly summarise the last point. There was an age difference of a few years and she was still more attached to her parents' house. And they wanted to live more detached from it.

**Test person:** Exactly. Exactly.

### Minute 12

**Interviewer:** Okay, then I would like to move on to the next question. How much attention did your children receive overall? One: They received extremely much, too much attention. And seven, you received no attention at all.

**Respondent:** (...) I didn't quite understand the question. So I'll repeat in my own words what affection I received from my wife at the time, never the children.

**Interviewer:** On a scale of 1 to 7, one is no affection. Seven How much affection, is it a 1 to 2?

**Respondent:** Hm. (...) At the moment. Everything from the birth of child 1.

**Interviewer:** (...) Can you read the chat?

**Respondent:** (...) I can read the chat. At the moment after. (...) And the children? The children have that. Child one is over 14. (...) Sometimes she didn't want to let go at all. So she got a lot of attention. It was quite exhausting for me to say, I'm still here, I can feed and change nappies too. It took a long time before I was actually allowed to do that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that means that the first child received a lot of attention from both parents, at least on the mother's side, but on the mother's side in a very strong way.

**Test person:** Yes, I was told afterwards that it was symbiotic. Good, it's still like that now! So child 2 is now over 12, he finally got a lot of attention from his mother. This was also due to the fact that I was the sole breadwinner and had corresponding working hours and had not been granted parental leave for child 2 by my employer at the time. And I had an hour's commute [...]. I was only home late when the child was halfway back to bed, or. Well, that meant I could do less cuddling and less work. [...] it was more possible then. And yes, I would say that it was similar with child 2. However, it was always a little bit strong again due to the work thing, at least one percentage point below seven. And I would say that I had a four and my ex-wife had a five to six.

### Minute 15

**Interviewer:** All right. And what would you say? How strong is your children's current bond with their attachment figures? That could be the mother, other family members, friends.

**Respondent:** So child 1 has a seven to the mother and the mother's circle of friends or family environment.

**Interviewer:** Seven should then be Excellent.

**Respondent:** So seven solvent and strong. Child 1 doesn't want to have anything more to do with me. Boycott of contact. Complete rejection. In the meantime. And child 2 is a bit torn between what he wants and what he's actually allowed to say. But one. (...) I'd say it's also a five to mum. And between us, despite the little time we have together and. I just give them the freedom they want, within the limits of how much freedom they have. That was my motto when child 2 was with me. And I would say about a 4 to 5. You know that he can rely on me and trusts me. And that's why it's not quite as bad as I would rate on the Richter scale.

**Interviewer:** The next question would be how the children's current contact with their carers is. They would probably put that on a similar level to the previous question.

**Respondent:** And precisely because child 1 has no contact at all, even seven, because it neither writes to me nor sends me photos, nor am I allowed to know what it posts or what. So I only get the school reports sent to me by the mum and am told that the child is changing schools or something similar. So never directly, but always via the mum. And if there's no one at all, then I've been told that's the lowest. And with child 2, I would say it could do more. But doesn't dare to give a four. Okay. Outlook now from them.

**Interviewer:** So do you have or have you had contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers, experts?

**Respondent:** Everything.

**Interviewer:** Everything?

**Respondent:** Yes. Family court still after eight years. Child 1 leaves sole custody via the mother. The mother applied for it for child 1. (...) And as would want, you need because of the money. A guardian ad litem is needed because of the children. The youth welfare office is the first to mediate. (...) So there's no getting round the juggernaut that's started.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe this relationship or your experience? I would give examples such as helpful or unhelpful, supportive or harassing, friendly, warm or unfeelingly cold.

**Respondent:** Institutionally uncaring, cold towards the fathers.

**Interviewer:** (...) Would you use these professionals again or recommend them to others?

## Minute 20

**Respondent:** Conditionally.

**Interviewer:** Can you go into this in more detail? Why?

**Respondent:** I became an [very unintelligible... ombudsman?] because I'm dissatisfied with what youth welfare office staff tell separation and divorce parents and give them legal advice, even though they have no legal knowledge and aren't even allowed to do it. They regularly send them all to family court after three or three appointments for legal advice, even though there are out-of-court settlement options that they don't point out. You have leverage that you don't use. And you are simply giving unlawful advice.

**Interviewer:** Hm. Were there any points that worked? Or would you have your own advice on how it could work better?

**Test person:** Well, in my case there were certainly positive aspects, such as the fact that a member of staff said that she supports the fact that both parents are capable of parenting. And I would say that it takes time for them to make a decision, but they make a joint decision. That's already a resource. And the guardian ad litem did not share this view at all. Then it is to be criticised that there was a high staff turnover in the youth welfare office, that there were people sitting in the courtroom with me who had not yet read the case and then thought they had to make a judgement. Nope. The positive aspects are that the specialised supervisor didn't listen to the complaints I submitted. And I find the person who now passes on what the mother says one-to-one to the family court as a recommendation that they should still be allowed to do this very strange. So from that point of view. [...]

**Interviewer:** Okay. We then come back to questions about you personally. Are you currently in a committed relationship?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And do you get support or encouragement from your current relationship with regard to the experience you had? One is the highest level and seven you get no support at all from your current relationship. **Respondent:** I get support because she is a child of separation and divorce herself. The last time she saw her father was when she was under 18. And that's why she thinks it's good that I do the things I do and the things that are necessary. So that others can benefit from it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And how stressful is or was the separation for you?

**Respondent:** (...) One, extremely. Seven, sometimes not extremely. One minus.

**Interviewer:** Okay, to the children or to your partner.

**Respondent:** The ex-wife. The partner didn't realise any of this. But the one who was in between, for several years, she was extremely aware of it. So one too.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (...) And how stressful do you think the separation was from the point of view of your children, i.e. that your children can no longer see you?

**Respondent:** Massively.

## Minute 25

**Interviewer:** So the highest level for both.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's the statement made by child 1 to the guardian ad litem and the court and the expert reports. Everything should stay as it is, then everyone knows where I am. (...) And then the alternating model was overturned because the woman needs a 6-month ban on contact with the G20, we now need a judgement. And that will now be pronounced as the guardian ad litem recommended.

**Interviewer:** All right

**Respondent:** And then the shit hit the fan.

**Interviewer:** Um, would you say that your ex-wife deliberately cut off the bond with her children or deliberately disturbed it?

**Respondent:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Can you go into more detail about how that happened?

**Respondent:** Well, when after five years you get furniture loaded on your doorstep, the mother and the children stand next to it and you're greeted with the words "have you got your rubbish" and you get in the car and drive off. (...) Where is the non-verbal and verbal manipulation? Cheerfully bad-mouthing my father was part of her daily programme when he was still living there. So I was always inadequate. Always too little. It wasn't enough, I always had to buy more. Whether it was money or prestige or something, I always had to. I should go back to university so that I could talk to her circle of friends on an equal footing. We had all studied.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Would you say those were your motives or do you have any other ideas as to why she behaved like that? The.

**Respondent:** She had a psychosis. And then it was a hypnotherapy therapy. And after a few sessions she came home and was totally out of it. And the reason. As it turned out afterwards, she told me in passing. In passing, so to speak. She's got two soup spitters in her. The one who ruins everything for her. And that's her father. And herself. Hm, so intrinsically motivated. There was something in her childhood that she hadn't come to terms with. She once hinted to me that she *had [experienced abuse]*. But she can't say exactly because she doesn't remember the abuse at all.

**Interviewer:** (...) Would you say that this experience and the therapy you mentioned that she received contributed to the situation, that these were the factors that influenced the whole situation?

**Test person:** So there was more than just that. The whole parental home and how the parental home looked after the child. So my ex-wife. That contributed to it. Me. Because we learnt things afterwards where I said, oh, that explains the context a bit.

**Interviewer:** So it was various factors that contributed to it, not one Yes?

**Respondent:** It's not just food, it's just one thing. It was certainly also my factors that played a part. My upbringing, my context. I wasn't an innocent lamb as far as that was concerned. I was psychologically pushed into corners where I didn't want to go, where I just fought back. And as soon as I got out of it, things were much better and easier. Everything. I wasn't free yet, but. We weren't able to explain it to my children in peace. When it stressed me out, I got loud. Even towards my children. (...) So yes, I did that which, to the best of my knowledge and belief, should no longer happen these days.

**Interviewer:** (...) So, since we're talking about your children, how old were they when the whole process started and how long did it last?

**Respondent:** Child 1 was over 6 and the last letter came a fortnight ago. So it's still not finished after more than 5 years. The maintenance advance fund is demanding money from me until I die. So that will never be finalised either. And with child 2, it just starts like it did with child 1. So I don't think it's finished even after several years.

**Interviewer:** What would you say are the consequences of the whole process for you, for your children and also for your ex-partner?

**Respondent:** The loss. Let's start with child 1. The parent-child alienation and the complete rejection of me as a father. On the other hand, when we see each other, it's not exactly a loving relationship, but more like one between former school leavers and teachers. Like that. And you like each other, but you don't need to touch each other or anything like that. It's not sterile, but it's polite and friendly. Erm. With child 2, it's very cordial. So some days, like this, some days like that. That also has its baggage to carry. With ADHD. He is stuffed full of medication. Hmm. Erm. Yes. And the ex-partner has benefited because they got a lot of money for a while because of the separation and divorce. (...) And now to the partner, who is very rich and...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...So you don't have to worry about anything anymore, that's...

**Interviewer:** (...) And have you received any kind of support during all this time?

### Minute 35

**Test person:** Me. We went to a total of six or seven counselling centres in our area. Well, we went to six or seven counselling centres, all unsuccessfully cancelled by the mother. I myself received good support from the then manager of a counselling centre here in town, which is actually only responsible for women and is very socially minded. Afterwards, because she had given up her job and changed internally, I went to a new counselling centre that actually says in its name that it is responsible for single parents and also looks after fathers, but doesn't really care about fathers. I also got in touch with the manager, who thought it was very professional. For my local organisation. And I also recommended her to others when someone asked Do you know the good guy and her? She also brought in a child and youth psychologist who I was allowed to talk to. Free of charge. Two sessions. (...)

Then I attended a course, Kinder im Blick and starke Eltern starke Kinder from the Kinderschutzbund. And both courses signalled to me that one was a pair of trainers, at Kinder im Blick. There needed to be two sponsoring organisations. I thought that was okay. That didn't give me the kick, I'll say it now. How do I deal with it? I attended "Strong parents, strong children" and realised what I can pay more attention to in my parenting and in my interaction with the children. And what my parenting style should have been back then and what I wanted it to be. But I couldn't put it into practice. So I looked for a lot of support myself. And then I went to an association based in a large city. In my case, the next largest local association. But they are active throughout Germany. Actually only for fathers in the name. And they set out to break new ground. And that's where I got to know counsellors. I was about to say fellow campaigners who had experienced even more extreme things and I spoke to one of them and got to know him a bit more. And that's when I realised that I wanted to do the whole thing professionally myself. And then I started to found a self-help group in my town and set up a self-help group as a sufferer for sufferers. That was a few years ago.

### Minute 40

**Interviewer:** All right. Let's move on to the last questions. Do you still have contact with your estranged parent? And could you imagine reuniting with your children? Or do you think that would be possible?

**Test person:** I'll start at the back. Reuniting with child 1 would be my greatest wish and my biggest Christmas present if it worked out again at some point. I don't know how long it will take for child 2. If that's what they want, then I'm open to that too. [...] I would think it would be really cool if we could sit down at the same table for Christmas and we, her new partner, her children, the children, our children, my partner, her child could sit at the table and eat Sunday roast together. That wouldn't be a problem. That's what I want, but it's something I've wanted since the separation. That's the claim. I am modest.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe how stressful the estrangement from your children was for you? One is it didn't bother them. Seven is it was extremely stressful for them.



**Respondent:** (...) Because I don't know if you can even write on the scale up to 100.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay. So there's a really, really, really big seven.

**Respondent:** I'm at a loss as to how that can happen. On the one hand. On the other hand. When I look at what I've learnt from the parenting courses and what I've heard, then the child can't help but be the way it is right now. And if I didn't think every time, it's not my responsibility, because the child lives with the mother, so it's the mother's responsibility, then I would be much worse off.

**Interviewer:** (...) And this is a repetitive question, but how stressful do you think the alienation is for the children, how do they feel?

**Respondent:** (...) In the case of child 1, I don't think it's a conscious burden, because he has learnt to suppress it so skilfully. My child 2, I think he would turn the wheel if he knew what was possible in the background that was not made possible. It was also very stressful for child 2, he said in between that he was going to kill himself.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so for child 2 it's seven, the highest level of stress, and for child 2 it's probably more of a medium, perhaps slightly higher level?

**Respondent:** Yes, exactly, child 1 has now more or less come to terms with the situation and it doesn't do him any harm if the father isn't there. It doesn't do any good when the father is there either. Instead, he has a substitute father with money and who was there permanently. The social father is now a substitute for the biological father.

### Minute 45

**Interviewer:** And you? As an adult, you experienced a process of alienation from your children. You also described how the children perhaps didn't realise that. But you yourself felt how it gradually got worse and worse.

**Test person:** It got worse when the youth welfare office set up a socio-pedagogical family support service, which placed a person of the same sex at our side and stood in for my, my husband's, wife. And he said "Well, look, it's not like that at all. He's writing quite matter-of-factly and you can also answer quite matter-of-factly." I was subsequently treated by this woman as if I had abused my child 1. To put it in a nutshell. I am, they turned the other way. They just said, only talk in my presence. If that's too much for you, he's too close. So they did a great job to make it happen the way it did. And I always remember: Dad wants everything to stay the way it is. And then it was the alternating model.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. How would you describe that to child 2?

**Respondent:** (...) He also said that nothing should change, it's good the way it is. The parents should stop arguing and arguing about the children. (...) And then the mother was diagnosed with ADHD and told to take tablets. And I didn't know anything about it, had been stripped of health care and then he said exactly what the mother wanted. (...) And did what the mother said. So alienation too, actually. But the sentence found a way to hide that to some extent. (...) But at some point, child 2 once said, I just remembered, that would be really cool that I, er, have two at home.... Child 2 now has two at home. One would be cool, different from mum's.

**Interviewer:** Gosh. All right. Yes.

**Respondent:** That's nice.

**Interviewer:** Yes, good. That was actually something too. It was actually the last question. We were very good in time.

**Respondent:** Thank you then.

**Interviewer:** Would I stop the recording now.

### Farewell

### Minute 48

## 12. Interview transcript anonymised - PG5-EV21

### Greeting

**Interviewer:** Good, then I'll start straight away. How old are you?

**Respondent:** Over 45.

**Interviewer:** Which gender do you feel you belong to?

**Respondent:** Male.

**Interviewer:** All right. Did you grow up in Germany or do you have a migrant background?

**Respondent:** I grew up in Germany. My father comes from or grew up in Latin America.

**Interviewer:** All right. So, the next question relates to the socio-economic status of your parents' home. That means education, income and occupation. This is categorised into seven levels. The first is very low. Second is below average status. Third is slightly below average, fourth is average, fifth is slightly above average, sixth is above average, i.e. very average status, and seventh is the very highest, so to speak. How would you rate that?

**Test person:** Let me think about it. If Axel Springer were somehow seven, then I would probably be five. (...) So my parents are not multi-millionaires. We lived frugally. My father was a doctor. My mum was mostly a housewife. So it will probably be five or six. It's difficult for me now. Maybe if you had an income or something. So five or six.

**Interviewer:** That's a good estimate. Like this. And how would you describe your own socio-economic status using the same scale status?

**Respondent:** Again, five or six. I am a surgeon. Exactly. And I work in a practice.

**Interviewer:** All right. So. What is your highest qualification to date?

**Respondent:** So I've successfully completed two university degrees and a doctorate in a degree programme.

**Interviewer:** Do you have siblings or half-siblings?

**Respondent:** I have one sibling.

**Interviewer:** So your parents stayed together until you were of age.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And are your parents still together?

**Respondent:** Yes. (...)

**Interviewer:** How would you describe your relationship with your mother? One would be extremely bad, two very bad, three bad, four average, five good, six very good and seven excellent.

**Respondent:** Erm. The last level.

**Interviewer:** So the last one I mentioned or extreme.

**Respondent:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** Very good. Excellent. All good. Would you also like to describe why that was so?

**Respondent:** Um, we get on really well. We can talk about everything, except perhaps the small area of sexuality. My mum is a bit more conservative in her mental and spiritual attitude. Exactly. So everything from that point of view. Everything is fine.

**Interviewer:** All right. And how would you describe that in relation to your father? With the same values.

**Respondent:** Erm, I would go down a notch, so to speak.

**Interviewer:** And why would you say that?

**Respondent:** And because my father has been in contact with my two estranged children and their mother for the last two years and hasn't told me anything about it.

**Interviewer:** So and because of the experiences in their parental home they feel emotionally prepared, equipped, one for very bad again, four for average again and seven for excellent.

**Respondent:** Today I would say five.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe your mental health? One again extremely poor, four again average and seven again excellent.

**Respondent:** (...) Five or six.

**Interviewer:** All right. And how would you describe your physical health?

**Respondent:** Overweight, overweight, as they say these days. More weight, more weight and unfortunately no longer very active in sports, which I was many years ago.

**Interviewer:** All right. So. Were you or are you undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment?

**Respondent:** I made an appointment after, after two unsuccessful court cases, I made an appointment in two, one or two consultations with a psychiatrist.

**Interviewer:** (...) Okay. Did you also get a diagnosis at that time or was that not enough in the one appointment?

**Test person:** Oh, that was acute stress disorder. I think so somehow.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, would you say you have physical complaints?

**Respondent:** Well, overweight. Overweight. Arterial hypertension? (...) Exactly. And sleep disorders.

**Interviewer:** (...) Okay. Hm. So. How would you categorise the conflict situation in your parents'

home? That is, in general, how much arguing there might have been back then. In this case, one would be almost not at all, i.e. very little, or let me rephrase the question so that it fits in with the other criteria. How much there might have been a dispute. One would be a lot. And seven would be quite a lot, and 4 would be average.

**Respondent:** So that was 4, average.

**Interviewer:** (...) So did your parents involve you in the parental conflict when you were still a child?

**Respondent:** No, but that's how they conducted the parental conflict. Well, or the ones there were, they were always just verbal, verbal arguments. And you just overheard it in the flat or later in the house. If it was somehow about house financing, thriftiness or something like that, or financing problems, building defects, then there was a lot of arguing, because there's a lot more building a house that can tell the children a lot, but then in case of doubt they also argue.

**Interviewer:** Understandable. So how much child protection did you experience overall as a child? That is, one would be the highest level of child protection, four would be medium and seven would be none at all. In other words, they were somehow protected by their parents or other families.

### Minute 10

**Respondent:** Good, parents, you mean?

**Interviewer:** Exactly. So even if it was a bit less, but then it probably boils down to the fact that the parents protected them from it.

**Respondent:** So if the parents ended up arguing and you somehow overheard them or you somehow snuck out of your child's room. Or I snuck out and then sat down on the stairs and listened. I don't know. Well, it wasn't the case that my parents only argued when I was at nursery or school or never in front of me. There were no active protective measures. So here it is. Now you have to put on hearing protection and we argue like in the American films Or put your finger in your ear. Now we argue for a moment. He doesn't mean it.

**Interviewer:** All right. And how much affection did you receive overall as a child? One would be the highest level, four would be medium and seven would be none at all?

**Respondent:** And then 2 to 1. Sorry. And 2 to 1.

**Interviewer:** So how strong would you say your current bond with your attachment figures is? That could be family, friends, partner.

**Respondent:** Erm. Based on my experience, actually very strong and at the same time always with the basic attitude, so to speak, that you could theoretically end everything quickly or er. Exactly, that it could change in a way like that. Erm. You have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, even though it doesn't actually burn that often, or even if you've never experienced it. Or, so to speak, you've experienced a kitchen fire once and now you always have a fire extinguisher, fire extinguisher with you, don't you?

**Interviewer:** That's a very good example. I understand that very well.

**Respondent:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So? And how strong is the current contact now?

**Respondent:** You mean with my parents?

**Interviewer:** Yes, no matter with whom. So the first question is how strong the current bond is. And regardless of whether it's parents in general, family or partners. Or now, how often you visit them, how often you see these people.

**Test person:** Well, I live with my partner. That means I see her every day. And my parents... I talk to them regularly on the phone, several times a week. Or we write each other messages. About current situations etc..

**Interviewer:** Okay, then you have the highest level one with your partner and a medium to medium level with your parents.

**Respondent:** So yes. Probably three, I would say. If you say partner every day, then somehow yes.

**Interviewer:** All right. Yes. I would have guessed three. Okay. Um. As a child, did you have contact with family courts, youth welfare offices, lawyers and the like?

**Respondent:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** All right, then I can skip the next question. The one after that too. Now we come to your family with the children. How would you categorise the conflict situation in the family, so to speak? That was already the case with the parents. And now they should deal with the...

**Respondent:** Well, I have two families, I'm the father of three children with two different partners.

**Interviewer:** (...) Um, best of all, do you have estranged children with both of them or only with the other one?

**Respondent:** No, with both.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then start with the first one first. And then I would ask about the second one right away

**Respondent:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Exactly. So the first family. conflict situation one no conflict situation, four medium and seven very strong.

**Respondent:** More like seven.

**Interviewer:** All right. And the second one?

**Respondent:** Seven.

**Interviewer:** Also okay. Just to emphasise that once again. With both families, they had very strong potential for conflict with the families.

**Respondent:** Yes, exactly. So with my child 1 and child 2, I haven't seen them for over 5 years because the mother has successfully prevented it. With mum number two, who fought with me for five or six years against mum number one. It's now the case that I haven't seen my child 3 for weeks. But if there was a conflict level seven, so to speak, if the scale were even wider than a continuous scale, then we would be at 25.

### Minute 15

**Interviewer:** Okay. Did you or the other parent involve your children in the parental conflict?

**Respondent:** I would rate that lower, because at least not openly, not openly in front of the children.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so here again the middle five would be very strong.

**Respondent:** Okay, so mum number two hit me in front of my child 3 and child 3 saw that. And... (...) Exactly that would be quasi partial, that would have been seven once and otherwise I would say a maximum of four.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How much conflict protection did your children experience overall? So probably more with the first family, if you look at the potential for conflict.

**Respondent:** (...) So the potential for conflict, the potential for conflict, is enormous. It's huge. I haven't seen my children for over 5 years. The potential for conflict is huge. But we were physically separated from each other. And so the conflict took place via email, WhatsApp and in court proceedings. In other words, in case of doubt, I can only tell my children that my ex-partner talked badly about my entire family and me. But I can't tell them exactly what she said and I can't say how she protected the children. She probably more or less passed on all the court letters to the children, even though they were small.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then I provisionally entered six for them, then I provisionally entered six for the families. So below-average conflict protection, simply because they can't completely confirm seven.

**Respondent:** Yes, exactly. That's exactly where it was. I don't know yet.

**Interviewer:** And how much attention did your children receive overall? One means completely the highest level of attention, four medium, seven no attention at all.

**Respondent:** I think our children always get attention from, well, as far as I can tell, our children have always received attention. So level seven. But independently of each other. And not with a common goal, so to speak.

**Interviewer:** How would you assess how strong the current bond between your children and their carer is? One would be the highest attachment level, four would be medium again and seven would be no attachment at all.

**Respondent:** Probably one or two. So we are already very well bonded. That good.

**Interviewer:** And do you know how much contact the children have with these attachment figures?

**Respondent:** Er. 24/7.

**Interviewer:** (...) All right. That's another solid A. (...) Okay, because the audio recording had just stopped. I repeat only they had the children, had contact with family courts and they have this as a maximum. [...]

So, then we were left standing. What would you say then? Had worked in the relationships.

### Minute 22

**Respondent:** (...) In the couple relationships, you mean?

**Interviewer:** Exactly in both of them.

**Respondent:** (...) Initially a lot and then at some point nothing at all. So there were shared interests. Joint holidays. So everything was actually very similar, so to speak, until at some point nothing fit anymore.

**Interviewer:** (...) Okay.

**Test person:** And that was actually always a difficulty in both relationships. To get straight to the point. Was sexuality after pregnancy or during pregnancy and postpartum?

**Interviewer:** (...) All right. And you mentioned that you are already in a new, stable relationship. How would you describe the support and encouragement you received?

**Respondent:** 150 %.

**Interviewer:** (...) Okay, good.

**Respondent:** So maximum.

**Interviewer:** Um. How stressful was the separation for you?

**Respondent:** (...) Number one was not so stressful because I separated from mum number one for mum number two. And separation number two was that I then separated mum number two from me and more or less created a new partnership within hours. That threatened my very existence.

**Interviewer:** (...) Okay, then the first one would be about average, so 4 to 5, average to slightly below average and the second one would be about one and two. So it's already very stressful. Yes. (...) Okay. How stressful would you rate the separation for your children? One would be again, it didn't bother you at all. Four would be about average and seven would be extremely stressful for them.

## Minute 25

**Test person:** Erm. Because relationship one is probably the highest level, the second highest level and relationship number two is, I think, maximum stress. In phases.

**Interviewer:** Can you explain why that was the case?

**Respondent:** Um, so in [...] relationship number one, there was virtually no contact from the youth welfare office because the youth welfare office [location] is so bad that we simply didn't do anything for the children, and didn't offer the children any help.

In separation number two and there was relatively little court contact from the children because the youth welfare office, the family court, was of the opinion that if the mother of an under 5-year-old and an over 5-year-old said that they didn't want to see the father, that would be quite sufficient to deny the father contact. And with child 2, my second or third child, they were at two, that's how it is, there was a maximum of direct court escalation. [...] Three court hearings, two, two competent ex youth welfare workers. They were carers first and were two hours she still has. Unfortunately. Exactly. And child 1 and child 2 only have their first hearing after four years and then an expert report [...].

**Interviewer:** Okay, that would actually lead to the next question. Can you imagine what the former partners' motives were for wanting to cut off contact with the children?

**Test person:** So that's the case with both mothers, from my point of view. So mum number one's life dream, life dream of working part-time, which is completely financed by the doctor for my children. The grandparents take over some of the childcare and she ends up in the nest she's made, so to speak. I have more or less destroyed my lifelong dream through my external relationships and then the new partnership. I would simply say financial, financial hatred, fear of financial decline and then the only chance to hit me and hurt me is to have been deprived of the children. Sometimes something like that.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe that in the second partnership?

**Respondent:** Mum number two learnt everything from mum number one, so to speak, because she fought with me against mum number one for many years. She found out that you can get tax-free maintenance, that you can go on holidays and the like without any agreement and that after seven and a half years you actually get sole parental custody, as you have for eight years or even after eight years, and the father is excluded from contact. (...) read some of the sentences, wrote some of them, did some of the internet research for the pleadings. And then she simply realised that this is a very lucrative business model. [...] You can also buy a child quite well with it. You can go on holiday with it and then, even if you don't work full-time, you can actually have a really good time and can also demonstrate to your new partner. Look, we don't have to take Dad into consideration. I or we're going to do this really hard together. Yes.

### Minute 30

**Interviewer:** So now we're at How old were the children during the trial and how long did the trial last?

**Respondent:** So the first court proceedings started in 2013. In August 2013, child 2 was under 5 and child 1 was over 5.

And child 3 was under 5 when the court proceedings began, so to speak. [...] 2019 was the first hearing. [...]

**Interviewer:** All right.

**Respondent:** And how all the processes Exactly that, doubts were still running, so to speak. So the, the. The last trial for child 1 and child 2 ended a few years ago, so after more than 5 years. Over 5 years of fun.

And with child 3, it's currently ongoing. The proceedings were, have now been suspended and now there's more or less a contact procedure on my side, a contact procedure on the side of my parents against the mother, because child mother two doesn't just show this behaviour or both mothers show this behaviour not just towards me, but they show it towards the whole family, my whole family. With the exception of my father, who always gives the children school report money and birthday money. Those are the only contacts. So whenever there are report cards, the children bring him the report card and somehow get €100 or €50 each. And on their birthday, everyone gets €100 in their hand and. Exactly.

**Interviewer:** And what would you say? What are the consequences for the children and for the estranged parents and generally for everyone involved that these proceedings have taken place? Or are still ongoing. Court proceedings as well as the whole process in general.

**Respondent:** So complete doubt about the rule of law, then in general. Then complete, complete doubt about German family law. (...) Then the whole question is simply about the German justice system, the German youth welfare offices. (...) And this whole system of youth welfare offices with their counselling centres, would-be counselling centres. So that there, they would all give the worst assessment, if there was an assessment at all. If you were to give one, they would all give the worst ratings everywhere.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe the overall support you receive, how you get through all the processes, including family and friends?

**Test person:** Well, a circle of friends of those affected has simply formed in the meantime. We are now a team. I have several chat groups and friendships have really developed through the whole thing. The other friendships are all affected. Those who are living in a harmonious relationship, slash an outwardly intact one, for whom it is sometimes difficult because the topic is omnipresent. And this omnipresence manifests itself with hello, come on, we're going on holiday together. Yes, wonderful. Have you booked? Yes, of course. We have booked. Okay, wonderful. Yes. Wait a minute, I can't book. I haven't heard back from mother number 2 or mother number 1 yet. I'm sorry, I have to cancel. I can't come along after all. Mother number 2 hasn't given me child 3 again.

### Minute 35

**Interviewer:** Okay, right there comes the follow-up question to the one or do you still have contact in any case? Do you still have contact with both parents?

**Respondent:** Well, mum number 2 [child 3] and I are still in contact by email. We meet at parents' evenings and at mum number one's [child 1 and child 2]. That was the last time I received a message from her. She asked me to adjust the child maintenance, as child 2 is now over 10. And otherwise this [...] person is not present in my life at the moment. But that will happen again, because I'm actually going to take legal action against some people, including her.

**Interviewer:** Yes, there is one more question included, and that is about child 1 and child 2, we know that there is no contact? But could you imagine a reunion with your children or would that be possible from your point of view?

**Test person:** I assume that it would be possible, because I'm a doctor and I don't think it's a 100% fatal illness, but I think it's something that can be patched up, despite the large scars. I'm a surgeon, so I simply think that time heals all wounds and all miracles. I think you can heal or repair these things from my point of view and start again if you want to.

**Interviewer:** Yes, like that. How would you describe the alienation from your children? One would

be that it didn't bother you at all. Four would be it was a moderate burden. And seven...

**Respondent:** 7.

**Interviewer:**(...) Um, actually self-explanatory. But can you go into more detail about why this is so extremely stressful for you?

**Test person:** In the end, it was always like that. My father was a bit older and an older father is an academic dad. And I always wanted to be a young dad. In my professional environment, I've always been the surgeon in charge who is always in favour of children [...] who simply has an affinity with children, so to speak. And even if it's a birthday somewhere, I just like to play with the children. I just enjoy it, it's fun for me. I don't think children who are scared of the doctor are bad at all. Or the surgeon, I don't think that's a bad thing at all, but for me it's actually more of a joy and fun to interact with the children in such a way that the children end up having a smiling treatment and then simply have a fun and enjoyable experience. Despite perhaps the fact that it's not quite so easy when you have to have an operation. And of course that hurts even more when you're doing it professionally. When you used to be a youth coach, when you actually had the idea of experiencing wonderful things together with your children.

Now it was, I'm doing it with child 3, [...] wife number two, I'm trying to experience nice things. I try to do the same with the children, my partner's two children. It's great fun for me. For example, I've now bought a BMX bike suitable for the national league at a bargain and I'm hiding it away for Christmas. And then being able to use it with my current partner's younger child. And I'm already looking forward to it like a snow king that I've somehow organised what I think is such a cool present. Yes, and I think that's great. Holidays together are just so great when the children somehow learn something, can do something, I can make something possible for them by giving them something that my parents or my father might not have been able to give me. Yes, that's just something. It's just something different. Experiencing that with my partner's children is just not the same as with my own children.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe it for your children? How stressful was the estrangement from you? There was one again It didn't bother them at all. And seven was It was extremely stressful for the children.

### Minute 45

**Test person:** Well, I can only surmise that it was also very stressful for my child 1 and 2. So maybe this stage five, because the mother simply broke off contact completely. It was just like that. So yes, I basically worked in [town] and was always in [town] at the weekends or from Thursday to Monday. She basically lived there in my flat and then from one day to the next it was just broken off. Just like that. Phone blocked, WhatsApp blocked, mobile phone blocked. So I can't tell you what happened to my children. I can only tell you what the children then said, that the children just said nasty things about me. Which A never happened like that, which B someone must have told them, because the children really always responded to an open question with more or less the same, more or less closed answer, which was rehearsed, memorised, recited. The mother went to the court hearings and somehow always had seven or ten pages prescribed, agreed them with her lawyer and then read out these seven to ten pages.

"Hello, my name is Dr [name] I would like to say the following..." And then she simply read it down, while I just went there with a pen and a blank sheet of paper and, in case of doubt, simply called up old documents on my laptop. And yes, the things were always rehearsed, they were always the catchphrases: "Yes, I feel threatened." "Yes, the father has no connection to the children." That's what I think - interesting. And then the children [1 and 2] said: "Yes, our father didn't look after us." And then I think to myself - yes, wonderful, that's why I always changed your nappies when I was there, from Thursday night to Sunday night or until Monday morning. But you don't know that, you little, little rascals. You were too small back then, but Dad was allowed to do anything that took the pressure off Mum, so I can't tell you. With my child 3, we are currently experiencing that she goes on holiday with us for several weeks, has great fun, absolute joy, everything is great, no phone at all, seeks contact with her mother if I don't force it on her regularly, because I say that's the rules. Um, we keep in touch with your mum when you're with us, if your mum doesn't do that, it's a shame. But I have this rule. Mum is just called and she is called regularly and that's not a decision. And yes, you can just see that, you can just see how this.... So the last situation was exactly last Friday, when my child 3 didn't dare to accept a chocolate muffin from me because her mum was sitting in front of her. Erm it then I ask it:

[name], do you want the chocolate muffin? I bought a muffin here in the shop. From the baker. Would you like that?" A friend's child is sitting next to her and her mouth is already watering. Her eyes are huge and she would like one too. And then child 3 looks at her mum, you can see that her eyes are almost like she wants this muffin straight away. Then it looks at mum and says "Mum." Then mum looks at child 3 and I stand behind her. So she, the mum, has her back to me. I couldn't see what kind of gesture or eye movement she was making. And then child 3 looks at me, looks at the floor, looks at me and says "No, thank you." And then I give it to my friend's child and you just realise that child 3 would actually have liked it and would have been happy. But it's just not allowed to do that, it's not allowed to do that and child 3 isn't allowed to actively talk to me. It's just completely ingrained. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And then we would actually come to the last question. Um, that you perhaps simply summarise how you as an adult perceived this process of alienation from the children. How you experienced it, so that you can simply go into more detail. Even if this has already been partially answered. But simply describe again from your point of view how this alienation process with the children is best initially only for family one. There is still contact with family two, but with family one, just describe again how it all took place, how you perceived the entire alienation process.

### Minute 49

**Proband:** The mother, so to speak, who has been taught the alienation cookbook or has implemented it step by step. Step one: restricting communication, then ending communication, completely blocking communication between the children and the parent, i.e. the alienated parent. Then the classic - accusations of violence. Making completely unfounded accusations, then moving away unknown and no longer providing the home address. This means that you can no longer go there in person. Then an absolute, absolute total failure of the youth welfare office, a totally failing judge, who is childless herself, who was born in 1967, who grew up as a child of divorce in the 1970s and 80s, who in my view suffered a severe emotional trauma, but who somehow never recognised this, but claimed exactly the opposite. Look, nothing happened to me. I never missed my father. I never needed my father, because you know, I'm quite successful. I became a judge without ever having any contact with my father. Full stop. Off. So you don't need fathers, so everything is great.

Then the whole thing is taken to the next level with the higher regional court, which simply fails one after the other. There is no help for children in the [federal state]. I can say this quite clearly from my own personal experience or from the support services. And there is a lot of hostility towards fathers. There is sexism. I've had to listen to statements from a woman [from an association]: "Small children belong with their mother, so there's nothing else. That's just the way it is, they don't need to change it somehow. And the alternating model, no, that doesn't exist at all, because the children belong to the mother or the child belongs to the mother. In [place] I then heard statements from the person assisting with the proceedings, herself a mother of divorce, a mother of children, who initially always told me: "Yes, you know, you just have to give the mother a lot of money so that she feels safe, so that she's not afraid, so that she can concentrate fully on the children. And if you do all that, then she'll allow contact again. And always be very kind to the mother. Be really nice, do everything she says, then everything will be fine again." And then she called me years later, cried when I told her about the developments and sent her written statement and then actually told me in tears that after the proceedings, in which she believed in the mother so much at the beginning and also in the judge, after nothing had happened, the youth welfare office was so bad and not just in my case, that she had given up her job as a guardian ad litem and was now working in a children's home, where the final stage of my children, so to speak, i.e. children from broken homes, would be looked after there, because at least she could still achieve something there.

And then, another two years later, I spoke to her again on the phone and she told me that she had now left the organisation because she couldn't take it anymore. And now only God, only God, the one who can judge the matter and only God can help. And she's now somehow taking a year of self-discovery and has somehow dropped out for a year. And now I haven't had any contact with her for a while. And then there's also a guardian ad litem, who has achieved virtually nothing in life herself from a law degree without becoming a fully qualified lawyer, she didn't get anything together and was then a housewife and mother for years. Her husband is a highly successful manager. She just has. The greatest success in her life is that she got her two children through their A-levels and now works as a pseudo do-gooder, as a guardian ad litem. In fact, she has also committed trial fraud and the like, made false statements. And that actually runs like a thread through this family law. That is the



absolute common thread. There is lying, lying. Deception. False statements are made, there are no facts and circumstances to verify. And the person who spreads the lies that please the judge and the guardian ad litem gets everything he wants and the other person can really present the truth on a silver platter. He is not listened to and is quasi.... If he then also criticises the helper system and the institutions, he is mercilessly punished for it. Exactly.

And if you are then supported by such a system, then it's just like a criminal gang clan getting help from the police to break in and steal and rob and blackmail. It's like being escorted once again for all criminal offences. And that, that's how I experienced it.

And it's more or less the same with mother 2, except that the mother of child 3 has gone a bit too far. Um, in family two with child 3 and mum number two, it's got to the point where there are now more than 50 criminal proceedings, criminal charges pending. In the meantime, a police commissioner had a personal meeting with the ombudsman and me lasting two and a half hours a fortnight ago, several public prosecutors' offices are involved, the state data protection commissioner is now involved to the maximum extent possible, there have been several newspaper reports on my case or on the fate of my children and I gave an interview on Deutschlandfunk radio, where I was also mentioned by name. And I'm hoping that the whole thing has now escalated to such an extent that I have hope. That the whole thing won't really be taken in the direction of... that people are simply worried that it could slide into this dimension and that everything that has happened will actually become public. And I'm now also very active on social media. This means that all those involved in the proceedings, people, judges, public prosecutors, court officials, legal counsellors are named by me, which of course leads to criminal charges and the like. But since I only tell the truth. I'll either go to prison as Gustl Mollath or maybe I'll win like Gandhi. You never know. And in the end, you just have to do it for your children. If I had terminally ill children with a cancer diagnosis, I wouldn't let them die a miserable death, I would do everything I could. And that's how I see it with my children. That's it.

**Interviewer:** All right. Then I would now officially stop the admission.

**Farewell**

**Minute 57**

## Publication series Child Welfare & Social

Paper Series in Best Interest of the Child and Social Sustainability

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No. 1 (August 2024) Jorge Guerra González (Author & Coordinator) <sup>11</sup>	Opportunities, risks and limitations of the family support system. Suggestions from its actors and from a meta-analysis towards a child welfare-oriented optimisation of the family helper system
No 2 (October 2024) Hannah Andresen, Sude Chalhouszian, Victoria Krause, Antonia Willner  Jorge Guerra González (Coord)	Study to investigate parent-child relationships and their possible consequences on, among other things, the life satisfaction and health of those affected. Alienated fathers

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<sup>11</sup> Co-authors: Stine Kluth, Amal Hamzé, Rosalina Clara Wilmes, Arvin Arenja, Rozerin Dalgic and Derya Ok; Elisa Krumholz, Emma Ruhnke, Amelie Wolber, Jenna Baldy, Birgit Hartkop and Cemile Ayse Nur Erylmaz; Angelika Benenson, Briella Boche, Hannah Evers, Jost Hildebrand, Aaliyah Marie Leye and Lara-Maria Mäder; Antonia Blunck, Vivien Borm, Carlotta Gatzen, Gesa Hinz, Julia Steffen and Ebu Bekir Yel; Lotta Gronau, Julia Mildner, Noah Tutz and Antonia Zorn. Su Ciftlik, Elisa Grünthal, Kira Nachtweh, Anna-Maria Vardanyan and Binta Sophie Kamagate

