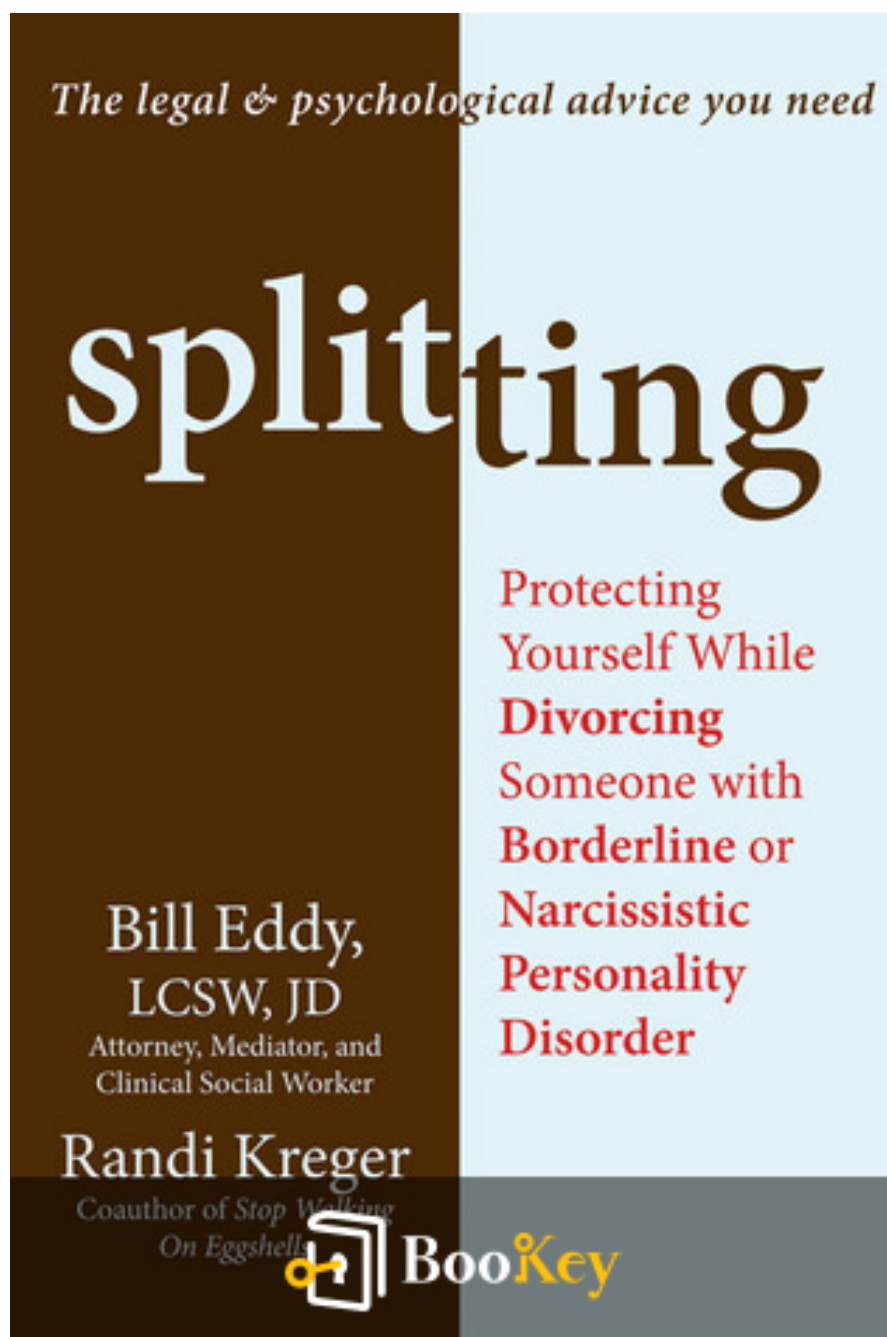


Splitting PDF (Limited Copy)

Bill Eddy



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Splitting Summary

"Guiding Through High-Conflict Divorce with Sanity and Clarity."

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About the book

In a world where relationships are often challenged by seemingly irreconcilable differences, ****Splitting**** by Bill Eddy offers a beacon of hope for anyone navigating the turbulent waters of divorce or clashes with high-conflict personalities. This insightful book delves deep into the psyche of individuals whose erratic behaviors and emotional volatility can wreak havoc on loved ones, legal proceedings, and even personal peace. Eddy, a seasoned lawyer and therapist, combines his dual expertise to equip readers with practical tools and strategies to not only survive but thrive during these tumultuous times. Packed with compelling examples, clear-eyed advice, and compassionate understanding, ****Splitting**** serves as a vital guide to protect both one's legal rights and emotional health. Embrace the journey toward clarity and stability, and discover how understanding the dynamics of conflict can transform adversities into opportunities for growth and serenity. Whether you're facing the storm head-on or supporting someone in the eye of it, Eddy's playbook is your essential companion to ensuring you emerge not just intact but empowered.

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About the author

Introduction to Bill Eddy

Bill Eddy is a distinguished author, mediator, and therapist renowned for his expertise in dealing with high-conflict personalities. As a co-founder of the High Conflict Institute, he has dedicated decades to developing practical strategies that assist individuals and legal professionals in navigating challenging interpersonal situations. With a unique blend of experience as a lawyer and a family therapist, Eddy brings invaluable insights into the dynamics of high-conflict relationships, especially in contentious divorce and custody battles. His groundbreaking work extends into his many books, workshops, and methods that continue to serve as pivotal resources for those seeking to manage interpersonal complexities with empathy and effectiveness. Through his contributions, Eddy has shaped how we understand and address the intricacies of human conflict, making him a leading authority in his field.

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Chapter 1 Summary: What's Happening to Us?

Summary of Chapter 1: "What's Happening to Us?"

The chapter opens with a concerning observation about the increasing prevalence of conflictual behaviors in American society. This includes more bullying, incivility, disrespect, and even violence within personal relationships, workplaces, communities, and politics. Such behaviors tend to increase tension rather than resolve conflicts, a phenomenon termed "high-conflict behavior." This pattern is characterized by personal attacks, crisis emotions, all-or-nothing solutions, narcissistic behavior, and negative advocacy. These behaviors mirror the dynamics seen in high-conflict divorces, where polarization and "splitting"—viewing people as entirely good or bad—are common. The authors, a psychologist and a family law attorney with extensive experience in mediating contentious divorces, analogize this to the current political climate.

The authors note that this high-conflict behavior is permeating politics, with public figures and media exacerbating tensions. Political leaders from both parties, affluent donors funding contentious campaigns, and sensationalist news coverage contribute to this escalation, much like feuding parents in a divorce who turn their children against each other. Historical practices of bipartisanship, such as senators from different parties dining together, have

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dwindled due to rising animosity, fostering an environment of secrecy and mistrust.

The authors raise alarm about the impact of such polarization on the political process, noting that reasonable and collaborative politicians, like Olympia Snowe, are leaving politics due to the toxic environment. They caution against a future dominated by high-conflict politicians if this trend continues.

The book aims to draw parallels between high-conflict divorces and the current political landscape, positing that understanding and addressing these shared dynamics can help mend societal rifts. The forthcoming chapters delve into the complexities of high-conflict divorces and explore how similar patterns are playing out in politics, ultimately proposing ways to heal the divisions. The authors also provide a High-Conflict Politician Scorecard as a tool for readers to evaluate political figures and foster more informed and cohesive civic engagement.

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Chapter 2 Summary: How Did Divorce Get So Ugly?

Chapter 2 Summary: How Did Divorce Get So Ugly?

In simpler times, family and societal cooperation were paramount, with shared goals uniting individuals. Nowadays, the complexity of family structures and societal responsibilities has led to a focus on individualism, often breeding conflict, especially within marriages and politics. This chapter explores the evolution of divorce and the dynamics within divorcing families, drawing parallels to political conflicts.

Types of Divorcing Families:

1. **Perfect Pals:** Once best friends, these parents part amicably and continue to support each other and their children, including sharing holidays and attending events together.
2. **Cooperative Colleagues:** Despite personal dislike, these parents respect each other's roles and cooperate for their children's welfare, albeit with minimal interaction.
3. **Angry Associates:** These parents neither like nor respect each other,



resorting to litigation and constant conflict, with negative behaviors affecting their children.

4. Fiery Foes: Known as “Inveterate Litigators,” these parents view each other as harmful to their children, engaging in relentless court battles and public slander, heavily impacting their children's mental health.

Dynamics in High-Conflict Divorces:

A term like “Tribal Warfare” by Janet Johnston describes how friends, family, and professionals rally for custody battles, exacerbating conflicts. High-conflict divorces typically revolve around three scenarios: one party being a High-Conflict Person (HCP), both parties being HCPs, or a high-conflict environment fueled by external influences, including legal systems and social circles.

High-conflict divorces often involve re-writing marital histories, where each parent vilifies the other, fueled by separation and adversarial legal procedures. This distortion creates exaggerated caricatures of each spouse, ultimately harming any chance of resolution and the well-being of the children involved.

Factors Contributing to Divorce Conflicts:

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- **Personal Reasons:** Involvement of a high-conflict person who continuously sabotages resolution efforts.
- **Interpersonal Reasons:** Ongoing negative interactions that sustain endless arguments.
- **Tribal Reasons:** External parties, including family and legal advisors, stoking conflict flames.
- **Legitimate Difference of Opinions:** Disagreements over matters like child schooling choices.

Hidden Agendas:

Divorcing individuals can have ulterior motives beyond their stated intentions, such as gaining financial support under the guise of custody demands or seeking reconciliation through frequent encounters during child transfers.

Parental Alienation:

In extreme cases, a phenomenon known as Parental Alienation Syndrome arises, where a child rejects a parent without valid grounds, often influenced



by the other parent, leading to severe psychological repercussions for the child.

The Role of Negative Advocates:

"Negative Advocates," including friends, family, and sometimes professionals, elevate conflict by backing negative emotions and behaviors. These advocates, often emotionally involved and uninformed, amplify high-conflict dynamics, paralleling enablers in addiction scenarios.

A Notable Example:

The chapter discusses celebrity divorces, exemplified by Kim and Alec's public battle, where both parties manipulate media narratives, each supported by their respective tribes, showing the devastating impact of high-conflict dynamics.

Implications and Conclusion:

In high-conflict divorces, misleading statements and adversarial legal processes often aggravate situations, endorsing false narratives that skew



perceptions and prolong disputes. These dynamics, akin to political confrontations where false allegations are prevalent, illustrate systemic issues in both divorce and politics – where entrenched conflicts amplify and harm all involved, especially children. The chapter underscores how adversarial systems, societal expectations, and individual behaviors interconnect and perpetuate high-conflict divorces, highlighting the necessity of systemic change for better resolution.

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Chapter 3 Summary: How “Splitting” Generates Hatred

Chapter 3 of this book delves into the concept of "splitting," a psychological phenomenon that often emerges in high-conflict environments such as contentious divorces or intense political climates. Splitting refers to the inclination to view people or issues in extreme, black-and-white terms, seeing them as all-good or all-bad. This mindset particularly affects the children in a high-conflict divorce scenario, leading them to develop an intense hatred for one parent, often referred to as the "rejected" parent, and an unimpeded admiration for the "favored" parent, despite previous close relationships with both.

The chapter posits that many high-conflict divorces are driven by individuals with borderline or narcissistic personality disorders, who inherently split the world around them into absolute categories. These individuals often alternate between viewing themselves as entirely good or bad, contributing to an unpredictable and toxic atmosphere. This environment facilitates the spread of splitting behavior to others, including children and even adults, making these attitudes contagious much like a viral infection.

Recent brain research sheds light on how this transference occurs. The human brain has two basic systems for conflict resolution, involving both the right and left hemispheres. The left hemisphere is engaged with logical problem-solving, associated with calm emotions and rational thinking, while

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the right hemisphere activates in times of crisis, promoting quick, defensive reactions. This latter system, favoring fight, flight, or freeze responses, is where splitting takes hold, fueled by the contagious nature of intense emotions such as fear and anger, much like an emotional Wi-Fi.

Furthermore, the amygdala, a small structure in the brain responsible for processing threats, can trigger a crisis mentality by quickly shutting down logical thought and steering individuals towards reactive behavior. However, the prefrontal cortex, the brain's control center, can override these responses, though it might require high levels of self-control, which many, especially young people with still-developing brains, find difficult to muster.

The role of mirror neurons is also introduced as a contributing factor to splitting. Discovered by researchers like Giacomo Rizzolatti and Marco Iacoboni, these neurons mirror the actions and emotions of others, promoting empathy but also making individuals vulnerable to absorbing the negativity around them – a particularly potent force in media consumption. Television and movies, with their rapidly edited, dramatic scenes, can exacerbate this effect, lending support to incivility and bullying, mirrored both in family courts and political arenas.

Highlighting the role of narcissistic leaders, the chapter draws parallels between high-conflict divorce dynamics and political climates. Narcissistic personalities, characterized by exaggerated self-importance, a lack of



empathy, and extreme confidence, drive splitting behaviors, making them persuasive to others, including in family court settings. They blame others for their misfortunes and manipulate perceptions to their advantage, which can sway public forums like family courts or the political sphere and contribute to cycles of blame and disrespect.

Through examples from politics, the chapter illustrates how splitting manifests similarly in electoral contexts. Personal attacks, crisis emotions, all-or-nothing solutions, narcissistic behavior, and the recruitment of negative advocates drive political splitting just as they do in high-conflict divorces. The behavior of high-conflict individuals, termed "high-conflict persons" (HCPs), along with their negative advocates, public forums, and bystanders, creates an environment ripe for division and toxicity. Just as children in divorces may take up the side of the more aggressive parent, voters do similarly in political contexts, often swayed by emotional intensity rather than logical reasoning.

As the chapter concludes, it urges readers to recognize the destructive potential of splitting in both familial and political arenas. If unchecked, it warns, this dynamic could destroy a nation's cohesion as much as it has destroyed family units over recent decades. The rest of the book promises to explore the four key players in electoral processes, highlighting the intersections between divorce and politics, as a call to understand and contain this high-conflict dynamic.

Aspect	Details
Chapter Focus	Exploration of the psychological phenomenon of "splitting," especially in high-conflict environments such as contentious divorces and political climates.
Definition of Splitting	Inclination to perceive people or issues in black-and-white terms, viewing them as all-good or all-bad.
Impact on Children	In high-conflict divorces, children may develop intense hatred for one "rejected" parent and unrequited admiration for the "favored" parent regardless of past relationships.
High-Conflict Divorces Drivers	Often driven by individuals with borderline or narcissistic personality disorders, leading to a dichotomous (absolute) worldview.
Neurological Basis	Splitting is linked to brain systems; the right hemisphere triggers crisis responses while the left hemisphere engages in logical problem-solving. The amygdala and prefrontal cortex influence reactive behaviors.
Role of Mirror Neurons	These neurons replicate others' actions/emotions, promoting empathy but also increasing susceptibility to negativity, especially through media like TV and movies.
Narcissistic Influence	Narcissistic leaders lack empathy, exaggerate self-importance, and blame others, fostering splitting behaviors in both family courts and political forums.
Political Parallel	In political contexts, splitting manifests through personal attacks, crisis emotions, and extreme behaviors, similar to high-conflict divorces.
High-Conflict Persons (HCPs)	Individuals who drive conflict, accompanied by negative advocates and influencing public decisions, fostering divisive environments.
Call to Action	Urges awareness of splitting's potential destructiveness in political and familial arenas, cautioning against unchecked dynamics which can fracture cohesion.



Aspect	Details
Future Focus	The book will explore electoral dynamics, highlighting intersections between family and politics to understand and manage high-conflict dynamics.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Managing Emotional Reactions and Logic in Conflict

Critical Interpretation: In Chapter 3, you are introduced to the concept of "splitting," deeply intertwined with the brain's response systems during conflicts. It highlights how individuals, especially in high-stakes environments like divorces or political arenas, are prone to adopt a simplistic, black-and-white view of situations, heavily influenced by fear and anger. This perspective is predominantly governed by the right hemisphere of the brain, associated with swift, defensive responses. However, the chapter offers an inspiring message about the power of the prefrontal cortex, which, when engaged, allows you to cut through the reactive noise with logic and rationality. It serves as a beacon of hope, emphasizing that, despite the contagious nature of negative emotions, you can counteract splitting by exercising heightened self-control and conscious empathy—acting as an antidote to divisive thinking. This serves as a reminder that attaining emotional clarity amidst chaos is achievable and, indeed, essential to foster balance and understanding in personal and collective conflicts.

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Chapter 4: How High-Conflict Politicians Turn Peace into War

Chapter 4 of the book discusses how high-conflict individuals, particularly in politics, transform peaceful situations into confrontational ones. These individuals view the world in adversarial terms and often see themselves as the only credible authority, alienating themselves even from supporters. Despite their charm and persuasive nature, high-conflict politicians often exaggerate or fabricate crises to present themselves as saviors, ignoring their own significant issues. The chapter warns against blindly trusting such individuals and encourages critical inquiry into declared crises and heroics.

In the realm of personal relationships, conflict resolution requires ensuring the safety of the relationship as well as oneself, exemplified by the Gottmans' research indicating a healthy balance of positive interactions. High-conflict divorces, however, often see one partner, typically the high-conflict person (HCP), perpetuate negativity, making resolution difficult. In politics, similar dynamics appear, where negative rhetoric leads supporters to demonize the opposition, inhibiting logical discourse and encouraging emotional reactions based on fear and anger.

Models such as Saddam Hussein, who showed signs of splitting and narcissism, illuminate the psychological dynamics of high-conflict figures. Saddam's failure to consider the real intentions of others, such as President



Bush during the Iraq War, showcases the flawed judgment characteristic of narcissists. The narrative highlights how such leaders, consumed by their self-importance, engage in all-or-nothing thinking that often leads to disastrous outcomes, such as prolonged conflict based on misunderstandings.

HCPs, in politics, distract from the issues with their personalities driving the conflict. Examples from recent history, such as the cases of Michael Nifong, Eliot Spitzer, and others, demonstrate how personal failings can escalate situations, reflecting on their inability to recognize real versus imagined problems and misjudging the perceptions of others. Narcissistic tendencies can distort judgment, leading political figures to make damaging decisions based on a belief in their infallibility and the demonization of dissenting opinions.

Furthermore, the chapter draws parallels between political conflicts and the rhetoric of war. High-conflict individuals use violent language to frame political debate, often leading to real-world violence and further polarization. The text points out that abusive language in politics can stimulate aggressive tendencies, varyingly invoking fear and loathing among audiences and followers.

The chapter also touches on how narcissistic self-promotion has become prevalent in politics, encouraged by the media landscape. Narcissistic



politicians garner attention and influence, yet their overconfidence can undermine their leadership effectiveness. The text stresses that while self-promotion is necessary in the competitive modern landscape, it does not necessitate narcissism. True leadership lies with those who are humble and work collaboratively.

In conclusion, the discussion calls for a reconsideration of how public discourse increasingly mirrors the adversarial language of warfare, urging both political figures and the public to adopt more balanced, constructive communication to avoid perpetuating conflict through rhetoric. The chapter closes with a reminder of the power dynamics at play, stressing the importance of recognizing and challenging the behaviors of high-conflict individuals and their rhetoric, which pose risks to the socio-political fabric.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Super PACs as Negative Advocates

Chapter 5: Super PACs as Negative Advocates

The political landscape has evolved to a point where rapid and effective persuasion of voters is paramount for today's politicians, paralleling the intensity seen in family court disputes. Here, negative statements, much like the emotionally charged allegations seen in family court, often have more impact and are prioritized over positive, fact-based arguments due to their potency in short time frames. In political advertising, particularly involving Super PACs, this concept is utilized to its fullest, leveraging negative advocacy to gain an advantage.

Super PACs play a crucial role in contemporary politics by functioning as powerful, negative advocates, comparable to the high-conflict players found in family courts such as contentious lawyers or expert witnesses who exacerbate disputes with authoritative statements. The ability of Super PACs to channel vast financial resources into political campaigns allows them to craft negative narratives about opposing candidates, similar to how well-funded parties in divorce cases find professionals to discredit the other.

The history of campaign finance reveals a significant shift after the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, known as the McCain-Feingold

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law, which curtailed 'soft money' contributions to parties but gave rise to tax-exempt entities known as "527" organizations. These developments foreshadowed the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court case, which further facilitated outside spending, dramatically affecting election dynamics and enabling Super PACs to function as shadow parties.

The effectiveness of negative campaign ads became notably apparent during the 1988 presidential race with the infamous "Willie Horton ad" which exploited racial fears to devastating effect. This template of attack continued through the years, as evidenced by the "Swift Boat" campaign against John Kerry in 2004, leading to the term "swiftboating" denoting politically motivated smear campaigns.

One prominent case demonstrating the impact of Super PACs on elections was Newt Gingrich's 2012 campaign. Despite initial momentum in the Republican primaries, his campaign was severely undermined by a flood of negative ads from Romney-supporting Super PACs, showcasing the power these entities wield to influence voter perception and outcomes.

The chapter also draws a parallel between political dynamics and high-conflict divorces through the analogy of premarital agreements, illustrated by the Contract with America in 1994. Such agreements in politics, akin to prenuptial contracts in marriages, can foster divisiveness and polarize relationships, inhibiting effective negotiation and cooperation.



The narrative cautions against the escalating role of negative advocates in politics, where both parties increasingly resort to negative advertising, leading to heightened polarization reminiscent of the divisive tactics seen in contentious divorces. The chapter calls for awareness of the divisive effects of negative advocacy and advocates for more constructive engagement in political discourse.

In conclusion, the prevalence of Super PACs and negative advocacy in elections parallels the dynamics of high-conflict divorces, where adversaries and their advocates thrive on division and manipulation. While this phenomenon poses challenges for democracy, understanding and mitigating the influence of negative advocates could pave the way towards more civil and cooperative political engagement, echoing a similar hope for resolution in family law disputes.

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Chapter 6 Summary: How the News Media Mirror Family Court

Chapter 6 Summary: "How the News Media Mirror Family Court"

In Chapter 6, the author delves into the parallels between the dynamics of the news media and those of family court, both of which thrive on conflict and polarization. It begins by discussing how gossip, a universal social behavior, serves as a bonding mechanism within communities, and further extends this to the role of the news media in society. Within media outlets, there is a race to be the first to report, creating a constant cycle of "Breaking News" that prioritizes conflict over content, fueling a perception of an increasingly dangerous world.

The discussion transitions to how modern communication, primarily through social media and electronic devices, has transformed the way people interact. Instant messaging has replaced face-to-face interactions, reducing the ability to interpret non-verbal cues, which comprise around 70% of communication. This lack of direct contact can lead to misunderstanding, paranoia, and mistrust.

In both media and family court, this absence of personal contact fuels fear and ultimately hatred. These conflicts are exacerbated by the use of

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"factoids"—unverified or false information repeated often enough that it is perceived as truth. This tactic resembles strategies in advertising and political campaigns and highlights a troubling similarity with family court dynamics, where exaggerated claims and personal attacks intensify disputes.

The theory of cognitive dissonance, developed by psychologist Leon Festinger, is explored to explain how individuals resolve the tension between contradictory beliefs by staunchly supporting one view, often through rationalization. This concept is illustrated by the polarized nature of modern media, which often presents one-sided narratives, reinforcing existing biases and minimizing effective dialogue.

The chapter references historical figures like Edward R. Murrow, who exemplified a more balanced and respectful approach to journalism, in contrast to today's sensationalist and confrontational style. It also mentions the "Weekend Update" parody from Saturday Night Live, which, although comedic, reflects the reality of polarized and aggressive media discourse.

The chapter discusses the Fairness Doctrine, which once required broadcasters to present balanced views on controversial issues. With its revocation, alongside changes like the Citizens United ruling, the media environment has shifted toward unrestrained high-conflict behavior, paralleling the adversarial nature of family court. Here, the focus is more on winning battles over resources than resolving mutual problems, with



attorneys often prolonging conflicts for financial gain.

The chapter closes by drawing a comparative analysis of strategies employed by both news media and family courts, showing how they perpetuate polarization, encourage extreme positions, and use repetition to establish biased credibility. This setup detrimentally affects public perceptions and, in the context of family court, can harm children by exposing them to their parents' conflicts.

Through these insights, the chapter emphasizes the systemic issues in media and family court practices that foster discord and highlights the need for more balanced and constructive approaches to conflict resolution.

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Chapter 7 Summary: A Nation of Alienated Voters and Alienated Children

Chapter 7: A Nation of Alienated Voters and Alienated Children

In today's politically charged environment, citizens often feel alienated by the divisive and high-conflict nature of the political process. This phenomenon mirrors the way children cope with high-conflict divorces, illustrating a broader societal dysfunction.

Scenario 1: Facing Futility

When children witness relentless conflict between divorced parents, they often experience feelings of frustration, abandonment, and hopelessness. Some attempt to mediate, resulting in deeper stress and disillusionment when their efforts prove futile. Similarly, voters who strive to reform the polarized political system often find themselves facing frustration and stress, as their calls for cooperation go unheeded.

Scenario 2: Choosing Sides

In some divorce situations, children resolve their discomfort by aligning with one parent, rejecting the other, and participating in ongoing conflicts.



This dynamic parallels voters who staunchly adhere to one political party, vilifying opponents. This polarization deepens societal divides, fostering a toxic environment where differing perspectives are dismissed and demonized.

Scenario 3: Detachment and Anomie

Other children faced with perpetual parental conflict detach emotionally, leading to feelings of alienation and anomie—a state of normlessness characterized by a lack of purpose. In a similar vein, many voters disengage from the political process entirely, feeling powerless and disillusioned by a system they perceive as incapable of resolution. This detachment is compounded by the relentless negativity of 24/7 news cycles, which exacerbate feelings of helplessness and anxiety.

Collectively, these coping mechanisms contribute to a cycle of dysfunction, as both children and voters struggle to find stability and certainty in the midst of ongoing conflict. The parallels emphasize the critical need for change, as the high-conflict dynamics in politics echo the damaging effects witnessed in fractured families. The call to action is clear: address polarization to foster a more cohesive and functional society.



Chapter 8: Healing a Split Nation

Chapter 8 of the book "Healing a Split Nation" emphasizes resolving national political conflicts through approaches similar to family mediation, focusing on empathy, listening, and avoiding personal attacks. The authors argue that political polarity and high-conflict behavior, reminiscent of contentious divorces, are driven by high-conflict individuals (HCPs) with narcissistic or borderline personality traits. This behavior exacerbates divisions, turning political processes into relentless tribal warfare, much like high-conflict divorces where parents aim to eliminate each other rather than cooperate.

The chapter highlights two types of conflict resolution: adversarial (eliminating opposition) and cooperative (preserving ongoing relationships). It advocates for the latter, drawing parallels to sportsmanship and emphasizing that political relationships should prioritize the continuation of functional cooperation beyond elections, much like successful co-parenting post-divorce.

The authors reference historical observations by Alexis de Tocqueville about the U.S. Senate's past collaborative nature, stressing the need for relational integrity in politics, similar to DBT in mental health, which teaches integrating opposing viewpoints.

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The narrative introduces Barry Johnson's Polarity Management, relevant to politics, which advises managing conflicts as ongoing processes rather than zero-sum problems. Applying this to U.S. politics means Democrats and Republicans could manage foundational differences—individual freedom vs. government regulation, sexual vs. financial freedom, merit vs. equality—rather than swinging between dominance and imbalance.

The chapter also delves into how societal behaviors and family influences shape political affiliations, often inherited from familial ties rather than critical analysis of policies—a dynamic mirrored in political cycles resembling high-conflict divorces.

For a healthier political environment, the authors propose techniques drawn from family mediation: using E.A.R. (Empathy, Attention, Respect) Statements and B.I.F.F. (Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm) Responses to defuse political tensions. They urge voters to be wary of personal attacks, emotional manipulation, and narcissistic leaders, emphasizing understanding polarities and seeking balanced solutions.

Finally, they call for systemic change—advocating transparency in campaign finances and setting limits on high-conflict behaviors in politics, akin to banning cigarette ads for public health. They conclude by encouraging the electorate to foster leaders who prioritize empathy and cooperation, underlining that ultimately, the healing and unity of the nation



rest in the hands of every citizen.

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