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THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN PARENTAL ALIENATION

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One of the hardest elements of parental alienation is when allegations are made by both children and parents. Professionals have a duty of care to investigate and gather evidence. But how reliable are the memories being recalled?

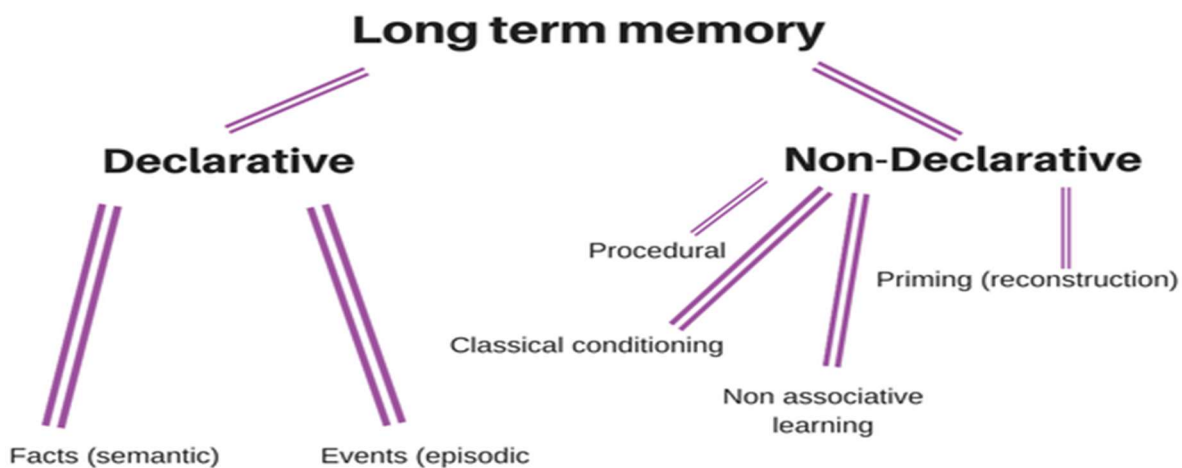
It has long been accepted that false memories exist and there are countless studies which confirm how easy it is to ‘implant’ a memory (which we will look into later), but for a practitioner involved in a parental alienation case, it can be hard to identify real from false memories and therefore recall confabulation may result in prosecution for the alleged abuser and, almost certainly, the loss of the relationship with their child.

It is therefore important that we understand what memory is and how it is stored in order to be able to analyse the role that memory plays in parental alienation.

What is memory?

Bartlett (1932) describes memory as ‘imaginative reconstruction’, meaning that memories consist of numerous elements, pieced together and replayed in a format familiar to the teller. The first two elements are:

Declarative
Non-declarative



A taxonomy long-term memory. Adapted from Squire and Zola-Morgan (1996)

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