

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN DEAL WITH DIVORCE

Two of the biggest factors in determining how well your children adjust to divorce have to do with:

A) How well you and your partner are able to keep your personal conflicts and hostility toward each other from affecting the children, and

B) How well you have adjusted to the marital breakup and are able to move forward in your own life.



Whether it be conflict or personal sadness, your children will be intensely attuned to you and your ex partners emotional state. They will also feel a sense of divided loyalties, that maintaining a good relationship with one of you will be interpreted by the other as being disloyal to them.

Here are some steps you can take to help your children be free to cope with their own feelings without adding the additional **burdens of their parents' pain and** emotional confusion:

Let them know that your divorce has nothing to do with them or anything they've done. It is a natural tendency for children to believe that they are responsible somehow for their parents being unable to work things out. It is crucial that you leave no doubt in their mind that they are not to blame. This will need to be repeated many times.

Be encouraging of your children maintaining their relationship with both you and your ex-partner. Acknowledge your differences with them, without being specific about your adult issues or conflicts you have had about childrearing. They just need a general acknowledgment that as adults you were not able to work out things well enough to continue to live together, but that they should feel the freedom to continue their relationship with each of you.

Accept that there will be differences between your household rules and your spouses. Children learn that there are many different sets of rules in different settings in their life, like the many different types of classroom rules their teachers set in school. When they test the rules in your household it is not necessarily **because your spouse doesn't have the same priorities as yours.**

When you do have conflicts with your spouse make sure to keep them between the two of you. Children can be pulled into your issues very readily and in many ways. Make sure not to triangulate them into your issues by enlisting them as spies and asking them a lot of questions about what happens in the other **household. Likewise, don't use them as messenger to communicate things to your spouse that you can't** negotiate directly.

Don't speak badly about your spouse to the children. Children assume that their parents have their best interests at heart, even when they become angry with you at times for not letting them have/do what they want. When you diminish your partners character or motivations, they will start to question your character and motivation too.

Allow your children to speak about their feelings about the situation to you in a neutral way. Be very careful that you keep your own adult feelings separate from this process. If you find that your primary topic of emotional discussion with your children always centers around frustrations they have with the other parent, you are probably pulling them into your world and indirectly venting your anger through the children.

Keep adult issues you have in your life separate from your children. Talk to a friend or family about these kinds of things, but not the children. If you are depressed, angry, unsure, or confused, find an adult to share this with. The children have already had their world turned upside down through the separation. They need the stability and certainty of knowing that they can count on their parent to have things together. They should not be burdened with being your confidante.

Keep as much of your world stable as you can. Try to ensure as little disruption to their day-to-day lives as possible. If they can continue in the same school with the same friends, same activities, extended family connections etc. try to maintain this to minimize the instability in their lives. Strive for as much constancy as you can provide.

<http://children.webmd.com/kids-coping-divorce>

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/children_divorce.htm

<http://parents.familieschange.ca/>

http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/help_child_divorce.html#

<http://www.education.com/magazine/article/coping-divorce/>

<http://www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/coping/helping-child-deal-with-divorce/>

http://www.sylviarimm.com/article_childcopediv.html

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/telling-your-children-about-the-divorce.html>

Here are some links for more tips on dealing with divorce: