



Helping Your Child Adjust to Divorce

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There's no doubt that a divorce can be a strain on every member of the family. Sometimes it's tough to look on the bright side and see that it can be the best choice for future happiness.

Children are usually hit the hardest by the divorce. If they're young, they may not be able to fully grasp the subject. Also, no matter what age they are, their first instinct is generally to blame themselves. The helpful news is that you can do a lot to get your child through this tough time.

Consider some of the following tips for helping your child cope with divorce:

- 1. Keep an open dialogue.** Talk to your children about the divorce. Even if you have some pent up feelings about your ex, this doesn't mean that you should shy away from the topic with your child. ***The worst thing you can do is act like nothing is going on.***
 - Talk to your child about their fears.
 - Allow them to cry if they need to do so.
 - Make sure that you always have an open ear for their concerns.
- 2. No one is at fault.** Make sure your children know that the divorce is *not* their fault. They won't know the true cause of the divorce, so they may turn to blaming themselves. They may even start to believe that there's something they can do to patch up the problems. Help them come to terms with these feelings.
 - Even if you believe someone is at fault for the divorce, it's important to avoid pointing fingers or showing angry feelings around your children. These actions only cause them to withdraw and internalize their feelings.

3. **Both parents still love them.** Tell your children that Mom and Dad both love them very much. With all the changes going on in your child's life, they need to know that one thing - the most important thing of all - *isn't* going to change.
4. **Let them know of changes ahead of time.** When major changes for the family are decided, ease your children into these changes. Let them know *before* the change happens so they have some time to prepare themselves. Gradual change is best.
5. **Explain visitation.** Explain the visitation arrangement to your children and tell them when they'll be able to see the other parent. If one parent won't see the children for two weeks, for example, be sure the child knows and has time to cope. ***Avoid blocking the child from seeing the other parent.***
6. **Avoid negativity.** It's hard to avoid negativity, especially if you've been unnecessarily hurt. Always take the high road and think of something positive to say about the other person. This eases some of the tension of the divorce for your child.
7. **Make arrangements for special occasions.** Everyone should get consideration when it comes to special occasions like birthdays or holidays. If you think you can be civil, try to share these times with your ex. If that can't be arranged, divide the time fairly. You can split up morning versus afternoon, or alternate holidays.

Divorce can certainly throw off your life's expectations, but it doesn't have to affect how you raise your children. Remember their needs, too, and ***you'll both persevere through this trying time.***