

Does divorce affect Children?

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While ending a marriage is difficult for all parties involved, divorce can be especially devastating for children. This is a confusing time for them, so it is important for parents to stay actively engaged with their children. Here are a few strategies a parent can use to help make the situation a little bit more manageable.

When first discussing the divorce with a child, devise a game plan. Children depend upon their parents for stability, so be consistent. In order to avoid confusion and inconsistency, it is crucial for both Mom and Dad to be on the same page. Choose the time wisely so that they have the opportunity to ask questions. There is no right or wrong way for a child to react, so allow them to express themselves. Make sure they know that while the divorce might change the family dynamics, both parents still love him or her.

Children react to the news of divorce differently, but it is important to pay attention to red flags. Be aware of any drastic changes in your child's behavior. Is he or she suddenly doing poorly in school? Avoiding friends or activities once enjoyed? Are they acting out in school or withdrawing from those around them? Any of these behavioral changes may indicate that they are having a difficult time coping with the divorce. Be willing to sit down and discuss what might be bothering them, or if the time comes, willing to call in the professionals. Therapy can help a child learn more effective coping skills and make the divorce feel less overwhelming.

Once a custody arrangement has been set and the divorce is well underway, be aware of your own behavior and how your actions may impact the well-being of your child. Don't use the children to get back at each other as this will only ultimately hurt your children. Refrain from negative comments about the other party in their presence, as this will only put them in the middle of your fighting and pressure them to choose sides.

As a parent, your primary role during a divorce is to provide support, stability, and unconditional love for your child. You have to remember that you are your child's role model and that your child will learn a lot from the way you handle conflict. Though divorce may end marriages, it doesn't have to dissolve a family. Effective communication and attentiveness can help ease the stress a child may feel during divorce, and devising healthy strategies can make the experience less painful. Use this as an opportunity to show your children healthy and respectful ways to resolve conflict.

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