

“Helping Children Through Divorce!” What Parents Can Do To Alleviate Their Stress

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When parents are in the throws of divorce, they themselves are usually going through great emotional upheaval, so they may not realize how stressful the divorce is for their children. Although some children seem to go through the divorce fairly easily, other children show clear signs almost immediately that they are having trouble with their parents divorcing. Since children generally believe many things have to do with them, they may take on the thought that the divorce was their fault. In other words, they think that perhaps if they had done something differently, like doing better in school, listening to their parents more, or never getting in trouble, the divorce might not be happening.

Things that Can Help Children Transition Through the Divorce

While divorce is so commonplace in today’s society, it’s still a very frightening time for kids and they need our help getting through the trauma. The very first thing to consider is that a child is going to be confused about the divorce and therefore requires patience and understanding. No matter how many questions they ask or how many times they may ask the same question, it is necessary that children be reassured by letting them know they are loved by both parents and that both parents will always love them no matter what. Let them know that it isn’t their fault that the divorce is happening and that you will both be there to talk with them and love them whenever they need or want you. Above all, never expect children to take sides. You certainly don’t want to put them in the middle of so much pain, since most of the time children feel loyalty to both parents. It is the job of parents to teach their children how to cope with challenging situations, but keep in mind, these are young people and you’re asking a lot when you ask them to accept something that will be changing their lives. The words you choose to explain about the divorce can either help a child deal with the situation positively or cause them unnecessary stress.

How To Tell Children About the Divorce

When you and your spouse have decided on divorce, be sure to tell the children together before any living arrangements change. The best way to tell the children is with both parents sitting down in the same room. When trying to explain the reasons for the divorce, say nothing unkind about each other but just tell the children that you have decided to separate because you are not making each other very happy. Remember to state very clearly that it has nothing to do with the children. Let them know what will be taking place, but let them also know they are not responsible and do not need to worry about trying to fix the situation. Be prepared to comfort them, as they will feel the loss deeply. And remember, children have no control over the situation, which makes them feel scared and powerless.

The following are some good points to remember when parents decide to divorce:

- Make sure the child is allowed to express their emotions. Whether they are sad, fearful, or angry, let them speak their feelings and encourage communication by being empathetic to what they feel.
- Never try to white wash what’s happening. Be honest about the situation by explaining that Mommy and Daddy have decided to separate but that it has nothing to do with them. Continue to reassure the children that they are loved and will always be loved even if you are all not in the same house.
- If you find it difficult to draw your children out, never hesitate to get help. Reach out for support from friends, support groups, counselors or therapists.
- Try to keep your routine as normal as possible; provide some sense of structure which may include eating at the same time, going to bed at the same time and continuing with normal daily activities.
- Do not argue in front of the children and never say bad things about the other; children come from both parents and when you say something bad about one parent, the child feels that they are bad as well. Focus on the good parts of each other.
- Do everything in your power to develop an amicable separation, as this will create an atmosphere of safety and security for the children. (Continued)

What If Children Steer Clear of Talking to Parents?

Oftentimes, children avoid talking to their parents because they don't want to hurt the parents or add to their pain. In some cases though, children feel great anger and therefore pull away from their parents. When you notice that a child is not talking about what's going on, you might consider finding someone that makes them feel safe and where they can comfortably express their feelings. It is at these times that a child should have either a close relative or friend or even a therapist help them sort out their feelings.

Some Helpful Suggestions

- Spend time with friends and family as that will help kids adapt more easily
- Let your child's teacher know that a divorce is forthcoming so they can observe the child's behavior.
- If you're a member of a church, you may want to consider the support of the clergy
- If members of the family are unable to help the child, a therapist can assist in working out complex feelings safely.

About the Lawyers at Straight Divorce

Straight Divorce has successfully assisted thousands of individuals with divorce situations for over a decade. Making the divorce process as simple as possible, the lawyers at Straight Divorce are available for consultation. To speak with an attorney, please visit Straight Divorce at www.straightdivorce.com or if you are ready for the services of a divorce lawyer, please call us at 1.800.353.6058 or e-mail us at articles@straightdivorce.com for assistance.