



Helping Divorcing Parents Help their Children

Even though you are choosing to no longer remain a couple, you will always be parents together.

To make your parental relationships work, you will need to readjust your expectations of each other to focus on the children. The healthy growth and development of your children should always be your primary goal and children benefit when both parents are involved.



What to tell the children

- Tell the children what divorce means without telling them intimate details about the parents' relationship.
- Describe how you tried to work on the relationship to prevent the break-up.
- Stress that both parents will always love and care for the children.
- Stress to the children that they did not do anything to cause the problems or divorce.
- Encourage and support your children's love for both parents.
- Encourage children to be open about questions and their feelings.

How to tell the children

- Tell them all together as a family, both parents and all children at once.
- Allow each child time to ask questions when they need to on their own time without siblings or each parent.

When to tell the children

- When a definite decision has been made between both parents. One parent shouldn't just move out one day without an explanation.
- Be honest when children ask. Children are perceptive and will sense when something is wrong. If you are still working on the marriage or haven't made a definite decision, be honest and tell that that is what you are doing.



"Co-parenting. It's not a competition between two homes. It's a collaboration of parents doing what is best for the kids."

– Heather Hetchler

Co-Parenting: Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Keep discussions focused on the child.
- Keep each other informed of any changes in routine or any concerns about the children.
- Keep each other informed of school activities and medical check-ups.
- As much as possible, plan your children's activities together so that both of you can support and encourage those activities.
- Be consistent with access, parenting time, rules, and schedules for children.
- Be open to hearing your child's feelings about the divorce even though it can be painful.
- Remember that holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions can be stressful and it is impossible for these events to be as they once were.

Don't

- Put each other down in front of the children.
- Bring up marital or financial issues in front of the children.
- Use parenting time as a weapon.
- Make major decisions about the children without consulting the other parent.
- Use your child as a messenger.

