



Divorce | *Tip sheet*

## Handling Divorce with Your Children

Divorce is extremely stressful, but research shows that most people, including most children, cope successfully with the stress. Research studies consistently indicate that divorce has few lasting effects on children's mental health or performance in school. Divorce poses many challenges to children but after a period of readjustment, most children succeed in facing the challenges.

The meaning of divorce is quite different for children of different ages, and explanations need to be tailored accordingly. Security and consistency are key.

### Be prepared to answer the following question for your child/ren:

- Where will I stay?
- Am I going to be left alone?
- Where will my stuff be?
- When will I see Mom? When will I see Dad?
- Do you still love me?
- Is it my fault?

### Tips when going through the process:

- Always reassure child/ren that they are loved.
- Always try to be neutral (or positive, if possible) about your and your child/ren's relationship with the other parent.
- Always think about the conversation in advance or even try it out on a friend first.
- Most important, put yourself in your child/ren's shoes. What would you want to know, and how would you want to be told?

### What your child/ren may experience following the divorce:

- Crying, worrying and constant questions about the divorce
- Increased aggression, disturbed sleep, spending more time alone or difficulty in school

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More on Next Page



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## Options for seeking an outside opinion:

- Friends and relatives
- Self-help books
- Professional help - family therapy or individual therapy, social worker, or children's books on the topic

## Tips for co-parenting: Create a parenting plan.

- Know when your child/ren will switch homes, where and when they'll be picked up, and what kind of behavior is expected at each home.
- Arrange with your co-parent whether your child/ren will call or text you when they're with the co-parent, then set a specific time.
- Make sure everyone is clear about their childcare roles.
- Follow similar routines at each respective home.
- Agree on what and how you'll discipline.

Wall, D. (2021, June 12). Helping children cope with divorce: Fact sheet - ABCT - association for behavioral and cognitive therapies. ABCT. <https://www.abct.org/fact-sheets/helping-children-cope-with-divorce>

Co-Parenting: Tips, Creating a Plan, Things to Avoid, and More. (2018, December 18). Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/co-parenting#seeking-help>

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