

Divorce Hurts: Help Your Child Cope



Divorce is tough on children. When parents split up, children ride a roller coaster of emotions. They can feel angry, sad, anxious and torn.

You can help your child cope with their feelings during and after a divorce. One important strategy is to end the marriage in a healthy way. Children are less likely to suffer negative effects when parents are civil to each other.

Suggestions to help your child handle a divorce:

- ◆ **Answer questions.** Your child wants to know what happened. Explain in a kid-friendly way that is appropriate for his or her maturity level.
- ◆ **Provide reassurance.** Let your child know they are not at fault. Express your love often.
- ◆ **Be patient.** Allow your child to adjust at his or her own pace.
- ◆ **Encourage honesty.** Tell your son or daughter the best way to work out their feelings is to be honest about them.
- ◆ **Avoid bad-mouthing** the other parent.
- ◆ **Provide stability.** Keep routines. Schedules and organization help children feel secure because they know what to expect.
- ◆ **Address changes.** Discuss what will change and what will stay the same.
- ◆ **Refrain from discussing adult issues.** Do not burden your child with your problems.
- ◆ **Allow regular visits.** A child should have regular contact with both parents, unless restricted by custody or court order.

Divorce changes a family. Awareness of your child's needs will allow you to help your son or daughter adjust.



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1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)

800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline