

The Effect of Divorce on Kids

To kids, parents are their first role models. Young kids especially see their parents as strong, resilient beings, and they observe their parents' actions as lessons on how to live. When parents decide to divorce or separate, the entire family must confront the consequences of this decision. Divorce has a huge effect on kids, no matter what age they may be. This effect varies from family to family, and a lot of it has to do with how the parents proceed in parenting after divorce. The hurt of the initial shock will subside, but the choices that parents make and the memories of the time that immediately follows the divorce will stay with their kids forever. Parents have many choices to make during this period, many of which will directly affect their kids. If parents put their children's needs in the forefront of every decision they make, they can make the overall effect of the divorce on their kids less painful.

A divorce or separation creates an enormous change in the family structure. Older kids might already have friends with divorced parents, but young kids may not understand what it is happening at all. No matter how old the kids are, their parents' divorce is a brand-new experience by which they are directly affected. Not knowing how to handle it, kids may look to their parents and others close to them for guidance on how to cope with the situation. When parents express fear, shock and tension in regard to the divorce, this will rub off onto the kids who were probably already feeling this. After seeing their parents feeling just as afraid as they are, the kids' emotions are amplified. Even though parents should be honest about their feelings, it is good for the kids to have a positive role model to look up to during this time of crisis. Parents should try to maintain a positive attitude and strong disposition. If kids see their parents staying strong, the effect on the kids is that they are likely to do the same. Maintaining a strong face also includes not staying negative things about the other parent or talking too much about the details of the divorce in front of the kids. Hearing negative things about their other parent will make a child feel like they must choose sides, which also causes

unnecessary anxiety and stress. Also, hearing the intricate details of the divorce might just confuse a child even more than they may already be. Parents should save conversations about the divorce, or about the other parent, for more appropriate environments like with their attorney or therapist.

With so many different, intense emotions stirring around the situation, it's hard for parents and kids not to become distracted by it. Kids are feeling an immense sense of loss and sadness, just like their parents. When parents have so many decisions to make and things to think about, they may forget that they are not the only ones dealing with the effects of this situation. Divorce can make kids feel scared and unsure, so they will need comfort more than ever. A child cannot hear the words "I love you" enough from their parents, and that is especially true during this time of transition. Even when parents are putting on a strong face, kids see expressions of love as reminders that their parents have feelings too. Parents should frequently make time to remind their kids how loved they are by both of their parents, not just one. It gives kids a sense of security to know that even though their parents might not live together anymore, the love that they both have for their kids hasn't changed one bit.

While maintaining strength and expressing love helps to positively change the effect of divorce on kids, carrying on communication as co-parents also helps the family transition into its new structure. Parents who continue to have an ongoing dialogue about their kids are able to keep each other updated about their children's best interests and overall wellbeing. Working together to maintain these things for their kids will have a positive effect on their children's lives overall. Co-parents who share parenting time and child-related expenses will also benefit from having a method to stay updated about it all. When parents are both on the same page in regard to their family schedule and parenting expenses, they are less likely to be confused and in constant conflict about discrepancies. The best way for parents to stay on the same page is to be reviewing the same information. The internet is a great place for parents to turn in this situation, as it provides a platform for parents to share information between homes without having to physically transfer a paper calendar, receipts, and spreadsheets. Web-based tools allow co-parents to share information in a timely manner while still maintaining a certain level of

distance. Amicable communication between parents after divorce helps the entire family get through it, kids included. Even if parents have difficulty communicating in a cordial manner, it is still beneficial for parents to work towards being able to have some level of connection in the interest of the kids. It makes kids happier to see their parents working together peacefully than to be constantly fighting or avoiding each other.

The effect of divorce on kids is greatly impacted by the actions taken by their parents regarding the situation. Parenting after divorce doesn't have to be so hard or negative, and kids shouldn't have to deal with the effects of their parents' divorce for their entire lives. Parents who choose to stay strong, show love to their kids, and maintain some communication are more likely to positively impact the effect of their divorce on their kids.