

How to Help Children Coping with a Divorce

Coping with a divorce is difficult for everyone involved, but it can be particularly difficult for your children. When you're not even sure how to deal with the situation yourself, it's confusing to try to help to help your children cope, too.

A good, simple rule is to be as open and honest as you can about the details of the divorce that will impact your children's lives, while accepting their emotions, even if you're surprised by these reactions.

Show your children they're loved.

As you did during your marriage, continue to show your children they're loved. Assure them that they had nothing to do with your divorce and that they shouldn't feel responsible.

Don't pretend everything is the same.

Be honest with your children about your divorce and the changes it brings. Give them as much information as you can about what's important to them. Take care not to introduce them to adult matters that don't concern their lives, though. With everything that is changing, they don't need to worry about these issues.

While change is inevitable with a divorce, try to maintain some consistency in your children's lives. Keep their relationships with friends and family of both parents. It is good for your children to have many opportunities to talk about their feelings with others they trust.

Remain neutral when it comes to your spouse.

Don't transfer emotions about your spouse to your children. You may have negative feelings toward your spouse, but you should allow your children to develop their own feelings. Maintaining neutral behavior is important in both your actions and in your speech about your spouse.

Accept your children's reactions.

Your children may react to your divorce with any variety of emotions. One common emotion, though, is anger. Don't be surprised by an angry reaction. Accept these feelings, and try to help your children come to terms with them through honest discussion.

Your children may choose not to talk to you about the divorce at all, choosing instead to share their feelings with other family or friends. Know that this situation is common. Children may be afraid to talk to you because they think they'll hurt your feelings or have to deal with emotions they aren't ready to talk to you about.

Whenever your children are ready to talk to you about the divorce, be ready to listen. Make sure your children know you'll be there when they need you.

Watch for serious behavior, withdrawal, or depression.

While the above guidelines are a start to help children coping with divorce, be on the lookout for more serious behavior from your children, such as withdrawal or depression.

If your children are having trouble dealing with the divorce, consider a neutral professional counselor to help you and your children get through the divorce.