

## Be Aware

- Children need extra attention.
- Children may behave as they did when they were younger.
- Children grieve the loss of the family as they knew it.
- Children need to have contact with both parents (visits, calls, letters).
- Children may become fearful about losing the parent with whom they live.
- Children respond based on their age and abilities.
- Children may have learning and behavior problems at school.
- Parents need extra support. (Find healthy ways to take care of yourself.)
- Families often find counseling helpful. This is especially true if one parent drops contact or if children are caught in the middle of their parents' disagreements.

## Do

- Explain the divorce to children.
- Tell children the divorce is not their fault.
- Reassure children both parents still love them.
- Give your children permission to ask questions.
- Tell children it's okay to love "the other parent."
- Give children permission to feel whatever they need to feel.
- Encourage children to express their feelings in ways that don't hurt themselves or others.
- Reassure children that they will always be cared for.
- Explain to children what they can expect. (Court, living arrangements, visitation.)
- Provide familiar surroundings and routines for your children.
- Continue to try to set consistent limits on your children's behavior.
- Give children age appropriate responsibilities they can do successfully.
- Find someone to talk to about your problems other than your children (friend or counselor).
- Use the legal system if you are concerned about your children's safety with the other parent.
- Give extra time to your children.
- Give extra hugs.
- Say "I love you" often.
- Listen to your children.

## Don't

- Don't pretend the separation/divorce has no effect on children.
- Don't use your children as your emotional support. Confide in other adults.
- Don't ask children to deliver messages to the other parent.
- Don't ask your children questions about your former partner's personal life.
- Don't "put down" your former partner in front of your children.
- Don't make your children responsible for deciding living arrangements. This is an adult decision.
- Don't make visitation depend on child support payments.
- Don't tell children that child support payments are a measure of their parent's love for them.
- Don't try to control or set conditions on what the other parent does during visitation (except for health & safety issues).
- Don't take visitation time away from your children because you are upset with your former partner.
- Don't involve children in the property settlement.
- Don't attempt to buy your children's affection.
- Don't share adult concerns (i.e. money, sexual issues) with children.
- Don't expect children to fill the absent parent's shoes.
- Don't ask children to choose "sides."

## School Can Help

- Let your child's teacher and/or school counselor know what is happening.
- Ask your child's teacher to provide any necessary information to both parents.
- Ask your child's teacher to arrange for either joint or separate parent-teacher conferences, depending on what is workable.
- Find out if there is a divorce support group for children at your school and encourage your child to take part.
- If there are legal issues about a child's contact with a parent, be sure to let the school administrators know. This includes restraining orders or any other court orders.
- Ask your child's teacher to contact you if your child's having a difficult time emotionally or with school work.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your child's needs related to the divorce, contact your school social worker or your school counselor.

## Reading List

### For Children

- My Family's Changing** by Pat Thomas  
**When Mom and Dad Separate** by Marge Heegaard  
**Let's Talk About Divorce: Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood** by Fred Rogers  
**Dinosaurs Divorce** by Lawrence and Marc Brown  
**The Boys and Girls Book About Divorce** by Richard Gardner  
**How It Feels When Parents Divorce** by Jill Kremetz  
**It's Not the End of the World** by Judy Blume  
**Don't Make Me Smile** by Barbara Park  
**Divorce is a Grown-up Problem** by Janet Sinberg

### For Parents

- The Parents Book About Divorce** by Richard Gardner  
**Helping Children Cope With Separation and Loss** by Claudia Jewett  
**Growing Up Divorced** by Linda Francke  
**Mom's House, Dad's House** by Isolina Ricci  
**The 10 Best Things I Give My Children** by Stephen Vannoy  
**Parents are Forever: Step by Step Guide to Becoming Successful Co-parents After Divorce** by Shirley Thomas

## Community Resources

- Children Of Parents Experiencing Divorce (COPED) Web Site**—[lancaster.unl.edu/family/divorce.shtml](http://lancaster.unl.edu/family/divorce.shtml)  
Individual, family and group counseling available through:  
**Community counseling agencies** (Blue pages of phone book—fees based on ability to pay)  
**Private therapists** (Yellow pages under Psychotherapists, Marriage, Family Counselors and Psychologists)  
**Support and self-help groups** (Blue pages of phone book)  
**Various churches** offer groups and counseling.



Need help? Don't know where to start? To find help with housing, health care, food pantries, childcare, drug or alcohol abuse counseling, mental health issues, aging concerns, and many other human services. Dial 2-1-1 or go to [www.ne211.org](http://www.ne211.org).

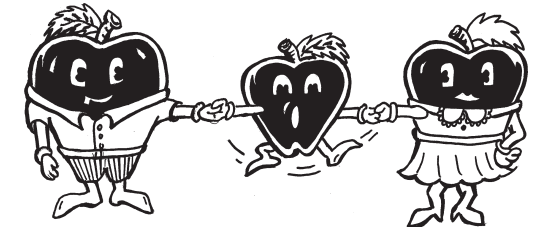
**A resource provided by LPS School Social Workers... because families matter.**

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# Children and Divorce

## How Parents Can Help



Divorce has become a part of many children's lives. About half of all school-age children will experience separation or divorce before age 18. This means a time of change for the family. Parents, as well as children, experience a sense of loss. It can be difficult for parents to know how their children are affected and how to help them.

Studies have shown divorce affects children's social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Parents are challenged to meet their own emotional needs, as well as their children's. With knowledge and support parents can meet these needs so their families can successfully move forward.