

6 Ways to Help Children After Divorce

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By Wall Legal Solutions



It's hard to deny that some children appear to do fine (or even better!) after their parents divorce. Depending on how difficult things were at home before Mom and Dad decided to go their separate ways, kids may breathe the same sigh of relief when it comes to an end. That said, it is important to understand that **some children will take the divorce of their parents very personally**—regardless of how frequently or genuinely they are encouraged to do otherwise.

If you notice your child **withdrawing**, demonstrating **unusual behavior**, **throwing tantrums**, or showing **agitation**, it may be time to **get help from professionals** who are **trained to help children after divorce**. Some children may **regress with regard to potty training**, and others may **struggle in school**. Teens may **rebel** more than usual, and kids (regardless of age) may become more **clingy while they try to understand what is happening**.

Bottom line: Divorce affects the **whole family** no matter what steps are taken to **make things as easy as possible**.

6 Things You Can Do Today to Help Your Kids

Regardless of whether your kids are showing **signs of anxiety** or whether they **seem** to be handling your divorce with ease, **you can do several things to help**. Here are some suggestions—

1. Maintain Your Child's "Normal" as Much as Possible

Maybe "normal" seems to be lodged in outer space at this point, but **you have the power to make a child feel normal in 100 tiny ways**. What **family traditions** can you maintain? If you always ordered pizza on Friday night, for instance, you can still do that even if your home address has changed. Be creative about maintaining normalcy.

2. Talk Carefully About Your Ex

He or she may be legitimately guilty of every dirty deed, but to your child, he or she is still Mom or Dad. And ***your child will remember what you say or do about the other parent.*** If you cannot find it within yourself to respect your ex, at least find it within yourself to ***respect your child. Save the venting (however legitimate!) for an adult in your life who won't be crushed by it.***

3. Practice the Art of Listening

Listen creatively. Not only will your child verbalize things in response to *direct questions*, but he or she may ***communicate with you in other ways.*** What do you hear your child say to ***other people in your presence?*** What ***music*** is your child listening to? What ***topics*** does your child want to discuss? Look for ***patterns.*** Listen *proactively.*

4. Reinforce Your Child's Freedom to Express

One of the straightest paths to *depression and anxiety* is a ***fear that we cannot truly express who we are or what we feel.*** Bottling up emotions, hurts, disappointments, or feelings is ***unhealthy*** and unwise. ***Reassure your child*** as often as necessary ***that he or she can tell you whatever needs to be said without fear*** of retribution or anger. (And then make sure you can handle whatever your child chooses to say!)

5. Refuse to Make Your Child Choose

Stubbornly refuse to put your child in a situation where he or she must choose between you and another parent. ***Love your child enough to put yourself in his or her shoes*** in every situation, and ***never make your child deliver messages or news on your behalf.***

6. Be Gentle and Patient

If you have recently finished or are in the midst of a divorce, chances are, you are ***dealing with your own personal feelings and losses.*** Likely, nobody understands the heartbreak and disappointment of a broken relationship better than you do.

So ***if your child acts out*** in an usual way or does something (such as wetting the bed or throwing a tantrum), ***keep in mind that he or she is likely also processing pain and disappointment.*** Instead of ***adding to the frustration by freaking out***—which would be totally understandable given your own current level of stress— ***offer a hug or word of reassurance*** that ***everything will be alright.*** This simple, ***gentle response*** will begin the ***healing process*** for both you and your child.

Remember: ***Time and kindness are great healers.***

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