



Armenta Learning Academy

Divorce: How to Calm Your Children's Fears

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CLARIFY WHAT'S HAPPENING, TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, AND SHOW THEM YOUR LOVE



1. Reassure your children that you love them and will always take care of them and look after their needs, no matter what happens between you and their other parent. You will always be their parent and do what you feel is best for them.
2. Explain that the separation, and later, the divorce, are grown-up business between Mom and Dad. Do not ever imply or state that your children had any responsibility for your fights or for the ending of your marriage, even if in your off-the-wall moments you may feel they did.
3. Tell your children they will now have two homes instead of one and begin to use words like "live with Mom or Dad" instead of "visit." Tell them how your two homes will work and back it up with action. Be fair with time with the other parent - do not take that away from the child even if it is easier for you, or you feel like "getting even" with the other parent. It only hurts your children.



4. Reassure your children that although there will be changes in your family life and that it will take time for all of you to get used to these new ways, after a time, things should turn out well. Explain to them that you may all have times when you feel confused, perhaps sad, or angry, but that all of you will have happy times too.
5. Show by your actions that you and the other parent can cope, that you are the grown-ups and are in control of what is happening to your family. A regular routine and house and safety rules are important ways to restore order.
6. Listen to your children's opinions and whenever possible give them options. When children are consulted on family matters they seem happier, and act more confident. You are responsible for the final decisions, but your children should be heard, and able to express feelings.



7. Be honest with your children; demystify the process with concrete information about the change that is simple, brief, and appropriate to their age.
8. Never threaten your children with abandonment, not even in hopes that it will make them obey you. It is dirty fighting on your part, unnecessarily frightening, (they have already lost one parent, would they lose another, too?), and can lead them to disrespect you and your tactic.

9. Don't lead children to believe that you and the other parent will reconcile unless this is a strong possibility. Fostering false dreams of reuniting their parents in that original close family feeling is not a help to their readjustment to this new life. If starting to date, keep children out of the situation until it gets serious and the children need to be involved.



10. Find comfortable ways to show affection for your children. Hold them on your lap, or hold their hands, touch them, give them spontaneous happy hugs, have loving eye contact. Words are not enough; follow or accompany them with affection. This human warmth and comfort is a vital physical communication that brings its own special kind of reassurance for both of you.

11. Reconfirm your assurances frequently during the first year and even into the second year after separation. Such reassurances are part of their feelings of security – especially actions and affection that say you are glad to be their parent, that you love them, and that they will be taken care of.

12. Never put down the other parent. It tears down the child's esteem, and puts them in the middle. Your children do not need to hear such negativity in the midst of a situation that is difficult enough as it is.



13. Check yourself occasionally to see how heavily you may be leaning on your children for their support. While you have a right to your children's respect and love, they are not adults and do not have the same emotional resources or experiences that you do. Repeatedly ask yourself, "Who is reassuring whom?"

14. Don't outlaw crying or honest display of emotions for your children or yourself. Crying is natural and offers release when it is spontaneous and follows appropriately on hurts, frights, or spats.

15. Enjoy your children, have some family fun times. In the midst of all the do's and don'ts and new pressures, take time just to relax together or play together. Laughter is a great healer and it nearly always gives a new perspective. The years together will go by quickly enough and these fun times will be part of your treasure.



16. Trust yourself and your instincts. Trust in your children, have confidence in their ability to change and learn. You are the best judge of what is best for you and for your children. If you have restored order to your household, have done your two-home groundwork, and established safety rules and house rules, you have already gone a long way in demonstrating your love for your children and in caring for their needs, always.

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