



FIVE KEYS TO HELPING CHILDREN THRIVE THROUGH DIVORCE

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By Rosalind Sedacca

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We are pleased to feature another article from Rosalind Sedacca. Rosalind is the founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network. She tends to write from a perspective on helping parents to help their kids through divorce, but the principles are generally applicable to non-parents working with children of divorce as well. Rosalind's perspective will also be helpful when divorcing parents come to you seeking advice.

No one plans to get divorced. But more than one million children in the U.S. will experience its affects this year alone. Divorce has become a reality in our culture and innocent children are coping with the consequences every day.

The good news is that divorce need not wound and scar your children if you put their emotional and psychological needs first when making crucial decisions. It's misguided parents – angry, resentful, hurt and mistrusting – who unintentionally set their children up for painful outcomes. These parents don't understand that every decision they make regarding their divorce will affect the well-being of their children in countless ways. The emotional scars are not only harder to see, they're also much harder to erase.

Here are five keys to helping your children move through and thrive after divorce.

1. Remind them this is not their fault.

Children tend to blame themselves for divorce, no matter how bad Mom and Dad's relationship has been. The younger the child, the more likely this is so. Sit down together and talk to your children, emphasizing that they are in no way at fault. You can say something like: "Mom and Dad don't agree about certain key issues and that has created conflict. Even when some of the issues are about you, it does not mean you are to blame. You are an innocent child who we both love. Sadly, Mom and Dad disagree about certain important issues -- but not about our love for you. You are not in any way at fault."

2. Focus on change -- not on blame.

Divorce is all about change within the family structure. Often those changes can be beneficial and create a more peaceful environment for your children. Never burden them with adult information and judgments. Focus instead on the fact that change is an inevitable part of life and not necessarily bad. Let your children see that everything in life keeps changing. "You grow bigger every year. Seasons change, clothing styles change, your school classes change. Sometimes it takes a while to get used to changes,





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like when you get a new teacher or try a new sport. In time you may come to like these new changes. Let's give it a try."

3. Respect your child's other parent.

When you belittle, put down or in any way disrespect your ex – regardless how justified it may feel – it hurts your children in deep and long-lasting ways. Children innately love both their parents and feel a connection to them. When you insult their other parent it creates confusion, guilt, sadness, insecurity and low self-esteem in your children. Instead, remind them that Mom and Dad will always be their parents and will always love them. No one will replace Mom or Dad either. "We will both always love you and be there for you, no matter where we live or how things should change." Then strive to do the right thing on their behalf.

4. Let your children continue to be children.

While it may sometimes be tempting, never confide adult content to your children. They are not psychologically prepared to handle the emotional complexity. Save venting for trusted friends, a divorce counselor or support group. Also never ask your children to spy, act as messengers between both parents or provide inappropriate details about the other parent's home life. Again, this pressure's them in many ways – none of which are positive. It is not their place to assume adult responsibilities or help you to find evidence against your ex.

5. Make decisions through the eyes of your child.

Before making any decisions regarding divorce issues, think about the consequences for your children. Ask yourself, what will they say to me about this when they are grown adults? Will they thank me for the way I handled the divorce – or be angry and resentful about my attitude and behavior? The choices you make will affect your children for years and decades to come. For their sake, take the high road and be a role model they will want to emulate.

Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, is a Divorce & Parenting Coach and author of How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children -- with Love! For her free book on Post-Divorce Parenting, her free weekly ezine, coaching services and other valuable resources about divorce and parenting issues visit <http://www.childcentereddivorce.com>.

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