

DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON KIDS

A Guide to Dealing With Feelings of Anxiety

ANXIETY: distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune. (from dictionary.com)

Types of Anxiety:

- General Anxiety
- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Panic Attacks
- Phobias

Scripture References About Anxiety

Neh. 8:10	Mt. 6:25-34
Ps. 34:4	Mt. 11:28
Ps. 46:10	Jn. 16:33
Ps. 55:22-23	Phil. 4:6-7
Prov. 3:5-8	Phil. 4:19
Prov. 12:25	Heb. 13:6
Is. 41:10	1 Pt. 5:6-7

ANXIETY...A SILENT KILLER! Worry is a normal part of everyday life, but when that worry interferes with a child's ability to accomplish normal everyday tasks it has risen to the level of anxiety. Numerous studies indicate that anxiety is a common reaction in children of divorce. Anxiety is often a reaction to the various stressors that a child faces when parents' divorce and can paralyze a child and/or stunt their development. Children are faced with a multitude of emotions stemming from a divorce that their young minds are incapable of processing and dealing with. This will oftentimes lead to anxiety. Children can suffer from separation anxiety or may simply have an unexplainable fear of some bad thing which is "bound to happen." Many anxious children may be quiet and complacent leading them to suffer in silence.

CAUSES OF ANXIETY AFTER DIVORCE

- Feelings of abandonment
- Changes in living condition
- Embarrassment
- Guilt
- Concerns about additional separation
- Fear of future unknown troubles that feel imminent
- Less access to parents because of deteriorating relationship or distance
- Decrease in income following divorce
- General worry
- Fear for parents

HELPING AN ANXIOUS CHILD

- ✓ Minimize stress
- ✓ Deal with your own emotions
- ✓ Talk about their fears over and over
- ✓ Help your child put emotions into words
- ✓ Don't dismiss feelings
- ✓ Be willing to listen
- ✓ Offer comfort and distraction
- ✓ Be realistic in responding
- ✓ Offer reassurance where you can
- ✓ Offer a stable environment
- ✓ Provide for regular exercise
- ✓ Consult a counselor when needed



SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Dizziness
- Nervousness
- Moodiness
- Clingy
- Demanding
- Sleep Problems
- Developmental regression
- Overly self-critical
- High need for reassurance
- Pulls back from existing friendships

Lead by Example

Children are very perceptive and will sense a parent's fears and anxieties picking up on words, actions and subtle clues from their parents. When children sense anxiousness from a parent, it will only serve to heighten the child's own anxiety. While parents should certainly find someone to talk to about their own anxieties, kids are not appropriate confidants.

*"Divorce thrusts the child into anxiety because it strikes the dependability of the social unit that is responsible for his or her being. It thrusts a division within the child's own identity. The child is cared for and need not fear for his next meal, for example, but he is anxious, for the very union that is responsible for his existence has regretted and aborted its unity of being... Anxiety nestles deep within him, whispering questions to his very existence." Andrew Root *The Children of Divorce**



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