

DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON KIDS

A Guide to Dealing With Feelings of Fear

FEAR: a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined. (from dictionary.com)

FEAR...A LIFE OF WORRY! In the midst of constant change, children of divorce often find themselves struggling with fear. Dr. Archibald Hart explains, "...it seem that no matter how open or hidden the conflict is, the final announcement of a separation or divorce is nearly always a surprise to the children. Their first emotional reaction is, therefore, one of panic, fear, and anxiety. What causes these feelings? Suddenly a cavernous unknown is opened up in front of the child, and he or she is being pushed into it! Divorce is a threat to the child's very existence as he or she knows it, an unsettling of everything stable and certain in life. It is an emotional earthquake of the highest magnitude and shakes the very foundations of security." (Dr. Archibald Hart, *Helping Children Survive Divorce*, 1996, Thomas Nelson)



Scripture References About Fear

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| Dt. 3:22 | Pr. 29:25 |
| Js. 1:9 | Is. 51:12 |
| Ps. 23:4 | Zeph. 3:17 |
| Ps. 27:1 | Mt. 10:31 |
| Ps. 34:4 | Mk. 5:36 |
| Ps. 34:7 | Jn. 14:27 |
| Ps. 56:3 | Rom. 8:38 |
| Ps. 91:4-8 | 2 Tim 1:7 |
| Ps. 103:13 | 1 Jn. 4:18 |
| Ps. 112:7 | Rev. 1:17 |

TYPES OF FEARS IN CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

- ❖ Fear of the unknown
- ❖ Fear for their stuff
- ❖ Fear of change
- ❖ Fear of abandonment
- ❖ Fear that if their parents stopped loving one another that they will stop loving them too
- ❖ Worry about who will take care of them
- ❖ Fear of the future
- ❖ Fear of embarrassment
- ❖ Fear from a less stable environment
- ❖ Fear of being forgotten or alone
- ❖ Fear of new relationships

HELPING CHILDREN OF DIVORCE DEAL WITH FEAR

- Find out what's bothering them
- Don't ever deny their fears
- Offer quiet reassurance
- Assure them that they are safe
- Provide physical reassurance (especially with young children)
- Give extra time and attention to the child
- Be patient (you may have to deal with the same fears over and over)
- Create a stable and unchanging environment
- Be predictable
- Don't overpromise
- Provide appropriate outlets to express their fear

PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF FEAR

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| • Stomach Aches | • Nail biting |
| • Nausea | • Nervous habits |
| • Vomiting | • Sweating |
| • Diarrhea | • Nightmares |
| • Head aches | • Trouble Sleeping |
| • Asthma | • Clinginess |
| • Allergies | |

Advice for Parents:

- Answer all questions
- Tell kids why you're getting divorced
- Assure kids they are safe
- Don't tell your child about your own fears and anxieties

Information is Key

Children of divorce need as much information as possible. The biggest fears are born out of the unknown, and children of divorce left to their own imaginations will come up with possibilities and outcomes which far worse than reality. A child who knows exactly what is going on will be in a much better position to deal with and overcome their fears.

