



MEDIATION CENTER

of Eastern Connecticut LLC

(860) 450 - 9266

Helping children cope

When to talk about a divorce

The time to tell your children about your divorce is after you and your spouse have made a firm decision to split up but before one of you has moved out of the home.

How to break the news

Tell the children together. Let them know that they were born into a happy family but that certain parts of your marriage have not gone well. Now it is best for the adults to get divorced.

Answer their questions honestly but simply. Check to see whether they understand your answers.

Explain the changes in their lives

The lives of everyone in the family will change during this time of extreme distress. Tell your children what will change and what will remain the same in their lives.

Talk about your feelings—carefully

Show your children your sadness and grief about the situation. By doing so, you give them permission to express their own feelings about the divorce.

However, do not belittle, ridicule, or criticize your spouse in front of your children. Keep in mind that your children are a part of both you and your spouse. When you say bad things about the other parent in front of your children, your children may feel that you are belittling, ridiculing, and criticizing them as well.

Save adult issues for adults to handle

Do not discuss your adult problems with your children. Let your children remain your children, not your support system. Find a trusted friend, relative, or group for adult support.

Keep in mind that conflict—such as fighting between parents—is scary to children. If you cannot avoid conflict, make sure that your children are not around.

Do not ask your children to take sides in adult conflicts.

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Help your children to express their thoughts and feelings

At appropriate times, ask your children about their thoughts and feelings about the family situation.

If they don't want to talk, that's okay. Let them know that you are willing to talk when they are ready.

When they do talk, listen carefully, and accept their feelings.

Older children—teenagers and young adults—often worry about their parents during this time. Assure them that even though you are having a tough time now, you will be all right.

Remember that your children still need both parents

Although the marriage is ending, your role as a parent is not ending. Unless the Court orders otherwise, after the divorce you continue to have all the parental rights and obligations that you had while you were married.

Children need to spend time with both parents. Each parent should encourage and foster the children's relationship with the former spouse.

Parents are role models for their children, in good times and in bad times. Your children are watching you and learning about relationships between adults. Act in ways that will help your children learn to build healthy adult relationships.

Do not use time with your children as a tool to manipulate or control the other parent.

Reassure your children that the divorce is not their fault

Many children believe that they are the cause of their parents' divorce. Tell your children that the divorce is not their fault.

Reassure your children that you love them

Tell your children that even though you and your partner are divorcing, both of you still love them and remain their parents.