

## **Lesson # 13: Tips on helping your Children through Separation and Divorce**

**Divorced Fathers Network  
Advocates Of Shared Parenting  
'Because Children Love Both Their Parents'**

### **More Tips on Helping Your Children Through Separation and Divorce**

1. Children have 'ready' and 'not ready' lists. They are more ready to accept and discuss certain things about your separation or divorce than other things. Respect their individual Time tables to the best of your abilities. For example, a child who is unwilling to visit the new household a mile away might do better if the parent who moved came to the old house to visit.
2. Try to avoid too many changes for the children, especially in the first year. Children's development can be greatly affected by change and loss. Don't underestimate the immensity of the loss that divorce causes for children. Every change on top of this one is an additional difficulty for them. If possible, try to keep the children in the same neighborhood and school .Continuity with teachers, friends, activities and schools can help. The familiar and the comfortable can offer support to your children. For instance, consider the timing very carefully when figuring out how and when to introduce a new love into the children's lives, and take it slowly.
3. Divorce can affect children's self-esteem and feelings about their social status, they can feel like outcasts. The single-parent family, or remarried family, may be less valued and trusted by others than the original nuclear family. For instance, if a child is no longer allowed to play with a particular friend, and suspects it's because his/her parents got divorced, it can deeply wound that child. When anyone in a social setting sees divorce as a tragedy or failure, it can cause problems for the child's self-esteem and confidence. The same is true if the children hear gossip about their parents. Parents need to reassure their children that their family is still respectable and worthy.
4. Your children love and need both of you. If you ask your children to believe you are the good guy and the other parent is the bad guy, you are asking your children to distrust and dislike another part of themselves. Putting children in a position where they have to choose sides causes internal battles with loyalty conflicts, and self-esteem problems.
5. Children will often try to protect their parents by saying and doing what they think the parents need to hear and see. Children love their parents, and want to make them happy, even at their own expense. Children can conceal their own feelings and needs in order to do what they think their parents need, and will sometimes try to determine which parent needs their protection the most.

*"from "Mom's House, Dad's House" by Isolina Ricci 1980,1997*

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