

How Can We Prepare Our Children for Divorce and Reduce the Impact?

Your task is to create conditions that will help your children to absorb the impact of the divorce and to respond with growth. When parents can come to satisfactory terms on their separation agreement both the parents and the children are better able to go forward and avoid much of the pain and expense associated with a litigated divorce.

Here are four areas to focus upon for children if you and your spouse are separating:

- Children worry that their parents will stop loving them or leave them as they are leaving each other. A child can feel abandoned even though they are in fact safely residing with a parent. Children can express through words or behavior by being overly worried that a parent's disapproval would lead to abandonment. Or children might become anxious and obnoxious in their efforts to elicit a response from the parent that assures them that their parents love them no matter what. Assure your children about the divorce by saying something like: "Love between mom and dad is a different kind of love than the love mom and dad have for their child. The kind of love that a mom and dad have for each other can change, however; the love mom or dad has for their child never goes away."



A child's experiences are even more important than words. Because of the crushing emotional strain of separation and divorce, parents can become depressed and distracted after a separation. Children may feel that their parents are not emotionally available in the familiar ways, and misinterpret your depression as evidence for their worry that they will be abandoned emotionally. Anything that each spouse can do to secure support for your own emotional well being will be in your children's best interest. If possible, try to avoid moving outside the geographic area soon after a divorce. A parental move also increases the risk of fear of preschool and elementary school age children that their relationship with their parents is vulnerable to loss of love.

- Children need a protected space within which to cope with the changes in their lives. Children can grow from challenge or even adversity if they feel that it is manageable. But if they become overwhelmed, they will have a harder time trying to understand and reconcile their parent's separation. Any additional challenges during the first few years after a separation will decrease the chances that a child can manage the separation constructively. This is another reason that parents must try to maintain their own physical and emotional health and to remain in the geographic area.
- Children worry about whether they have caused the divorce. You should assure them in your conversations that this is not the case. Children continue this worry because they tend to believe that their thoughts or actions have been responsible for bad and good events. Parents can powerfully convey that the child is not responsible and continue to show a caring, loving relationship around their child.
- Children need to idealize their parents. There is another reason to value your continuing parental relationship and your child's relationship with each parent. Successful child development requires that a child sees his or her parents as powerful and wise even more so than they really are and then to come gradually to see their human flaws and limitations. The child is automatically placed in an irreconcilable conflict if one beloved parent thinks poorly of the other parent. Any disparaging comments made by a parent to a child about the other parent can be very harmful to the child's young mind and should be absolutely avoided no matter how satisfying or reasonable such comments may be to that parent at the moment the impulse to make the statement presents itself and should never be done.

A separation agreement will very likely lead the way to a simple no contest divorce or uncontested divorce.

[The Divorce Clinic Simple No Contest Divorce in North Carolina Web-site](#)