Effects of Divorce on Children
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As divorcing parents of children, you have the most influence on how your divorce will affect your children. Divorce is a separating of family, tradition and familiarity and it impacts all family members. Sometimes divorce is what is required to help family members function in a healthier way and it is the beginning of new and better changes. However, in most cases, there is some casualty that happens as a direct result of divorce.

Divorce is a time of crisis, transitions and rollercoaster emotions. When people experience this potent combination of experience, good judgment and decision making are the first things to go. You may experience nine emotions all at the same time, one day you are sure you feel angry and the next day it is shock, your whole world has been turned upside down, you may not know what you are feeling. It is not uncommon to lose sight of the kind of person you thought you were and the kind of person you thought your ex-spouse was. How does this effect children? In a major way.

You have the power and opportunity to minimize the negative effect your divorce will have on your children. It is important to keep in mind some things that will help you to accomplish this and keep the focus on your children. Below are some valuable tips to reduce the negative effects of divorce on children.

• Treat your child as an important human being, with unique feelings, ideas and desires and as someone who is also adjusting to major family changes.

• Your child needs to feel a sense of security and belonging in a loving environment in your home and the other parent’s home.

• A child needs a relationship with both parents and the freedom to openly express these emotions without feeling they are being disloyal to one parent or the other.

• You have strong emotional needs during your divorce. Make sure you have the appropriate support and avenues to be able to express your emotions in a healthy setting. Do not use your children as your therapist or confidant.

• The decision to divorce was between you and your spouse. Your child needs to know that the divorce is not their responsibility.

• Reinforce to your children that as parents you both will continue taking care of their needs.

• Each parent is unique and has different ways and styles of being a parent. Your child needs guidance from both parents where s/he can be supported and loved.

• Living in separate households requires organization and transition. Allow your child the opportunity to continue relationships with both sides of his/her family, grandparents, cousins, etc.

• Keep lines of communication open. Be willing to discuss age appropriate topics about family situations.

• Do not degrade, gossip or make negative comments about the other parent in front of your child.

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- Children need to have a secure relationship with both parents without being placed in a position to manipulate one parent against the other.

- Children can be easily swayed by fun or having “no rules” at one parent’s house. Do not undermine time with the other parent by suggesting tempting alternatives to get them to spend more time with you.

- Reassure, reassure and reassure your children that the divorce is not their fault.

- Create a special place for your child’s own belongings at each parents’ residences.

- Allow your children to express anger and sadness in their own way. Don’t try and talk them out of their feelings.

- Children should not be messengers between parents. They should not carry notes, legal papers, money or requests between parents. Work with each other to keep children out of the middle.

- Children should not be put in a place to make adult decisions, including where they will live, where and when they will be picked up or dropped off, or who is to blame.

- Make sure you allow your kids to continue to be kids. Don’t allow them to take on adult responsibilities or become a parent’s special confidant, companion or comforter.

Your EAP is here to support you and your children through the challenging recovery of divorce. You can reach us by phone 24/7 at (800) 777-4114 to speak with a counselor or arrange for in-person sessions, or request services via our online portal: www.firstchoicееap.com.

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