

# Children of DIVORCE

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**It's a fact.** Every year, millions of kids experience a situation in which their parents separate or divorce. Often times, these situations can lead to the child having confused feelings and mixed emotions. Some kids don't know how to communicate their feelings and feel like they are the only ones who have ever gone through such an experience. The truth is that almost half of all kids in the United States have divorced or separated parents.

Many children go through their parents' divorce with relatively few problems or permanent negative effects. However, separation and divorce can be devastating and traumatic to some children and difficult for them to handle. There is no guide that a parent can follow that can guarantee that children will come out of a divorce unscathed. Every situation, and every family is different. Trauma is determined by the child's *experience* of the event, not simply the event itself. Different children in the same family may have a dramatically different emotional reaction than the others. The attitudes, words and actions of each parent plays a large role in determining the child's attitude about the situation.

There are many things parents can do to help their child cope with the challenges of divorce:

- Make plans to sit down with your children and communicate with them face to face
- Don't expose your children to marital conflict
- Don't make your children take sides
- Be patient with your children and express your love for them often
- Ease into new routines and living situations if possible
- Do not put your children in the middle and make them the messengers
- Seek professional assistance if needed
- Reassure your children that the divorce is not their fault

It's unfortunate when families are faced with making difficult changes to the family structure. Although kids may struggle with a divorce for quite some time, the real impact is usually felt over about a 2-to-3 year period. During this time, some children will be able to voice their feelings but, depending on their age and development, other kids just won't have the words. They may instead act out or be depressed. For school-age kids, this is usually evident when their grades drop or they lose interest in activities. For younger children, these feelings are often expressed during play. Regardless of the age, divorce can be difficult for all of the members of the family. However, in the long run, when changes need to be made, taking certain steps and talking with your children and letting them know they are loved unconditionally, will help things go more smoothly.

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## Resources for Parents

[www.divorceandchildren.com](http://www.divorceandchildren.com)

[www.talk-aboutit.com](http://www.talk-aboutit.com)

[www.divorcesource.com/info/children/children.shtml](http://www.divorcesource.com/info/children/children.shtml)

## Resources for children

[www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home)

[www.childrenanddivorce.com](http://www.childrenanddivorce.com)

## Books:

I Don't Want to Talk About It: Author: Jeanie Franz Ranson

The Most Important Thing: Author: Rhonda Roth

The Divorce Helpbook for Kids: Author: Cynthia MacGregor