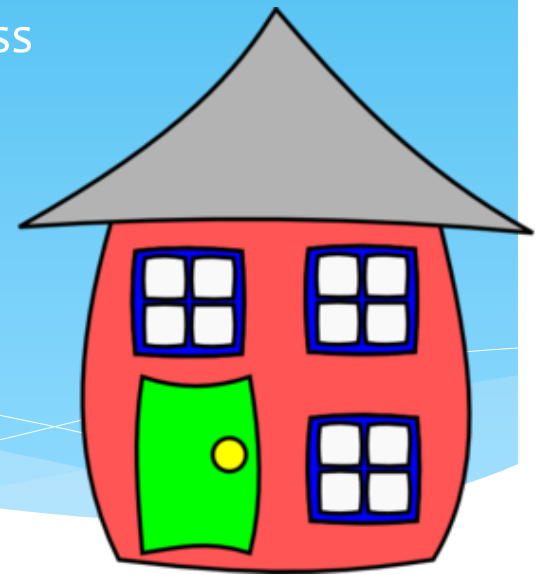
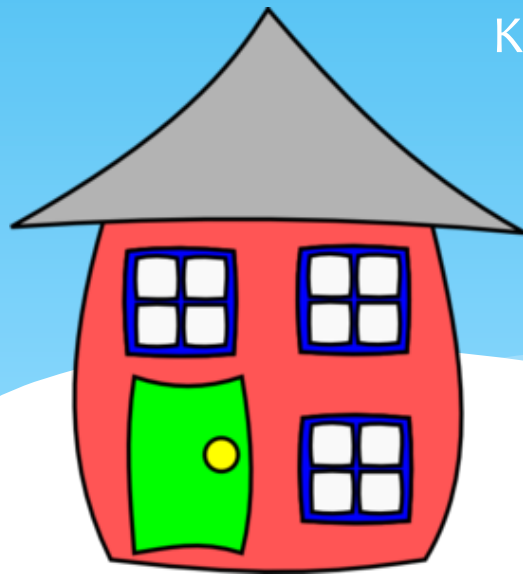


Separation and Divorce: Why children struggle and how they survive

Kiri Legg, BA Psych, MSW in progress
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You are not alone!

- * Most people have personal experience with divorce and separation, or know someone who has.
- * Like with other losses in life, divorce challenges our resilience and well being
- * During these difficult times, people find ways to cope and get back on track



Levels of Conflict in Divorce and Separation

Low Conflict

- * The separation is managed without outside support

Medium Conflict

- * Outside support is needed to mediate the separation process and reach an agreement

High Conflict

- * Court involvement is needed to resolve disagreements and custody arrangements
- * Often a drawn-out, stressful, highly emotional process

Talking to the Experts



What are some challenges your family, or someone you know, has faced during a separation or divorce?

Common Reactions to Separation and Divorce

Parents

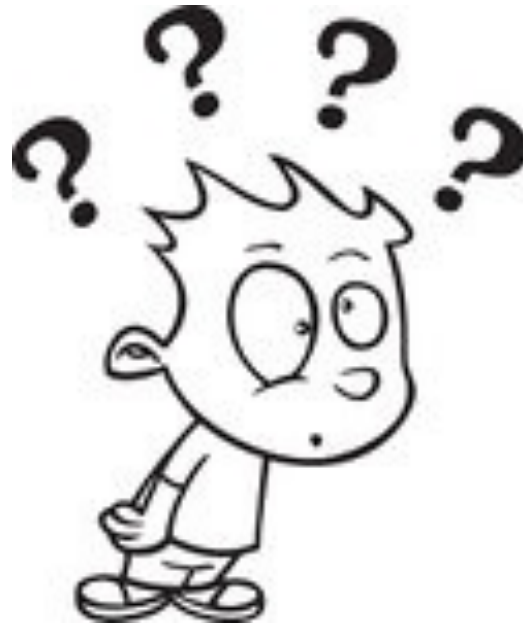
- * Anger, sadness, fear, pain
- * Happiness, relief
- * Worry about children
- * Guilt
- * Relaxing the rules, giving in



Common Reactions to Separation and Divorce

Younger Children

- * Trouble sleeping
- * Falling back on 'younger' behaviours
- * Confusion
- * May blame themselves
- * Anger, Sadness
- * Fear of abandonment
- * Physical symptoms
- * Acceptance
- * Concern for parents
- * Temper Tantrums, Stubbornness



Common Reactions to Separation and Divorce

Pre-teens and Teens

- * Shock, anger, sadness
- * Disappointment that parents couldn't keep the family together
- * Conflicting feelings
- * Stress, worry about the future
- * Withdrawal from activities
- * May cope well
- * Acting out- arguing, not following rules

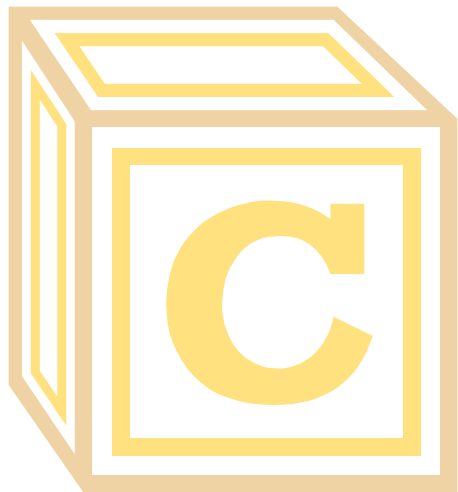


Was there anything that helped
along the way?



What can we do to help?

The Three 'C's



- C**ommunication with Kids
- C**onsistency of parenting
- C**ollaboration among parents

What can we do to help?

- * Reassure them it is not their fault
- * Answer questions honestly without blaming
- * Validate their feelings
- * Let them know they are not alone
- * Listen
- * Maintain a community of support
- * Keep consistent, predictable schedules
- * Look to the future
- * Bridge the gap
- * Take care of yourself
- * Maintain positive strategies/lifestyle

High Conflict Separation/Divorce

- * The monkey in the middle

Children get caught between their loyalty and their need to please

- * Avoid children witnessing conflict
- * Reassure that they are loved
- * May need 3rd party help



What are some of the upsides
to separation/ divorce?

The upside

- * Ending of previous conflicts
- * 2 of everything
- * New opportunities that may not have been possible before



When to seek help

Persistent changes to behaviour that impact daily life

- * Frequent angry or violent outbursts
- * Trouble in school
- * Withdrawal from loved ones, preferred activities
- * Sleep problems
- * Drug or alcohol abuse
- * Eating problems
- * If they ask for help

Resources

Books

- * *It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear* by Vicki Lansky, Book Peddlers
- * *The Divorce Workbook for Children* by Lisa M. Schab, LCSW, Instant Help Books
- * *The Single Parent Resource* by Brook Noel & Art Klein, Champion Press, Ltd.
- * *The Divorced Child: Strengthening Your Family Through the First 3 Years* by Joseph Nowinski, Ph.D, Palgrave/Macmillan

Websites

- * www.survive-divorce.com
- * <http://www.yoursocialworker.com/sep-dev.htm>
- * <http://familyservicesottawa.org>

