

children &



**DIVORCE**

Second Edition

## The Family Center of the Conciliation Court

---

The Pima County Family Center of the Conciliation Court is located in Tucson, Arizona. The Family Center of the Conciliation Court provides information, counseling, mediation, and custody/visitation evaluation services for families experiencing marital stress, separation and/or divorce. Services are available to assist individuals, couples, and families in finding solutions to their problems. The professional staff members at FCCC have advanced degrees and specialized training in family counseling and mediation. Services are available free to any resident of Pima County.

THE FAMILY CENTER  
OF THE CONCILIATION COURT  
32 NORTH STONE, SUITE 1704  
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85701-1403  
(520) 740-5590  
[fccc@sc.co.pima.az.us](mailto:fccc@sc.co.pima.az.us)

Published by: The Family Center of the Conciliation Court, 32 N. Stone, Suite 1704,  
Tucson, Arizona 85701-1403, (520) 740-5590.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission of the publisher.

First Printing, June 1992  
Second Edition, March 2001

## Preface

---

Dear Parents:


The Court is aware that you are going through a difficult period in your life—the termination of a significant relationship that has resulted in your being blessed as a parent. The stresses that this transition can cause may well divert your attention from the needs of some very important people—your children. As a fellow parent, I know that raising kids in one household can be a daunting challenge. Your task is complicated even more when that challenge is divided between two households.

This booklet is intended to provide you with a perspective of what children who live under two different roofs need from their parents if the trauma of the separation is to be minimized in their lives. It assumes, however, that while you and your former mate no longer get along together, there is no abuse, neglect or significant domestic violence in the relationship. Should this be the unfortunate case, then the safety and welfare of the victim(s), be it parent or children, becomes of paramount importance.

It is my sincere wish for you and your children that these materials will help you to better recognize your kids' needs and to put aside for their sake the problems that led to your decision to separate. We all know that whatever the circumstances, it wasn't the children's fault and they should not be made to bear the burden. Some years ago I was privileged to attend a play in Dublin written by the noted nineteenth century Irish playwright, Oscar Wilde. Called *A Woman Of No Importance*, it dealt with two separated parents fighting for the love and affection of their child. The play closes with one of the parents turning to the audience and stating, "Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older, they question them. Sometimes, they forgive them."

Consider these materials carefully as you work through this difficult period in your life. Try to set as a goal that you never do anything that would require your children to forgive you in years to come.

Sincerely,



Hon. John M. Quigley  
Presiding Domestic Relations Judge  
Pima County Superior Court  
Tucson, Arizona

## Dedication

---

The second edition of this booklet is dedicated to Tanner Pilley. Tanner's generous gifts of time, professionalism and sincere personal interest in improving the lives of children and their families made the first booklet possible in 1992. His efforts transformed our bits and pieces of knowledge about children and their divorce experiences into a readable booklet that has been praised by the legal community, mental health professionals and the general public. On behalf of all the children who must endure more than they should, The Family Center of the Conciliation Court extends its thanks to Tanner who passed away before we could complete this second edition.



## Acknowledgments

---

This booklet was prepared by the Family Center of the Conciliation Court of Tucson, Arizona. The following individuals were instrumental in the formulation of this project and made significant contributions in terms of leadership, creativity and the development of materials:

The Honorable John M. Quigley—Presiding Judge, Domestic Relations Division

Fredric Mitchell, Ph.D.—Director, Family Center of the Conciliation Court

Milt Hardin, M.A. (chair); Frances Bernfeld, M.Ed.; David Gooden, ACSW, CISW;  
Ford Nicholson, M.S.

Special thanks to the Tucson Public Library and the Diversity Forum Advisory Group, as well as Paul LaFrance, Kathy Robinson and Joe Romero, support staff of the Family Center of the Conciliation Court, for clerical and technical assistance.

We also wish to acknowledge all those individuals who dedicate their time and effort to helping children and parents deal with the pain of divorce. A special acknowledgment goes to the Family Center of the Conciliation Court staff, from whose years of personal and clinical experience this project emerged. We wish to extend a special thanks to those professionals whose widely acclaimed and influential works have helped shape many of the ideas contained in this booklet:

Louise B. Ames, Ph.D.; Joan Blades, J.D.; Arnold Gesell, M.D.; Richard Gardner, M.D.;  
Richard Gosse, M.A.; William F. Hodges, Ph.D.; Frances L. Ilg, M.D.; Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D.;  
Matthew Mc Kay, Ph.D.; Peter Rogers, Ph.D.; Burton White, Ph.D.;  
Judith S. Wallerstein, Ph.D.

# INTRODUCTION

---

The first edition of this booklet provided divorcing parents with information about the rights and needs of their children both during the divorce and the period of family reorganization following the divorce. It was intended to be a resource to assist parents to renegotiate a new parenting relationship that truly focused on the needs of children at different stages of development.

The Second Edition provides parents with the same essential information. It adds new findings in the area of children's reactions to divorce, basic information on developing parenting plans, references to cultural diversity, a revised and updated bibliography including internet sites, and special attention to the dangers of parental conflict. The Second Edition is also available in a Spanish language version.

As in the first edition, the information in this booklet is based on examples of common types of adjustment reactions of children. Not all children will necessarily behave in ways described in this booklet. **If problem behaviors persist over time or are extreme in nature, parents may need to seek professional advice.**

The authors hope this information will be instrumental in helping families reorganize into different, and yet constructive, vital relationships.

# DIVORCE: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

---

Children have the right to:

- Develop and maintain an independent relationship with each parent.
- Be free of the conflict between the parents.
- Be free from having to take over the parental responsibility for making custody/visitation decisions.
- Be free from having to take sides with, defend, or downgrade either parent.
- Be guided, taught, supervised, disciplined and nurtured by each parent, without interference from the other parent.
- Be financially supported by both parents, regardless of how much time is spent with each parent.
- Spend time with each parent, regardless of whether or not financial support is given.
- A personal sleeping area and space for possessions in each parent's home.
- Be physically safe and adequately supervised when in the care of each parent.
- A stable, consistent and responsible child care arrangement when not supervised by the parents.
- Develop and maintain meaningful relationships with other significant adults, as long as these relationships do not interfere with or replace the children's primary relationship with the parents.
- Expect that both parents will follow through with the child care plan, honoring specific commitments for scheduled time with the children.
- Both parents being informed about medical, dental, educational and legal matters concerning the children, unless such disclosure would prove harmful to the children.
- Expect that their parents will consider any special needs (developmental, mental, emotional or physical) they might have when arranging a child care plan.
- Participate in age-appropriate activities so long as these activities do not significantly impair their relationship with either parent.

## NEVER MARRIED PARENTS: A WORD TO THE WISE

by Ford Nicholson, M.S.

---

*This booklet has limited its scope to the difficulties facing children and parents who go through a divorce. The original version of this booklet, printed in 1992, did not include effects on children who are born to parents who have never been married to each other. It would take a separate book to fully address the special difficulties often faced by the parents and children in situations in which the parents are not married to each other. Until such a booklet is published, the authors hope the following information is helpful.*



Never married parents are becoming a significant, if not unique, family structure. Across the country, the number of children born into and/or raised in a never married household is growing dra-

matically. From 1980 to 1998 (18 years), the number of unmarried couples with children age 15 years and younger increased 250 percent according to 1999 U.S. Census Bureau information. In Arizona, about 38 percent of the children born in 1998 were born into a family situation where the parents were not married. (Public Health Services, Office of Health Planning, Evaluation and Planning, Arizona Center for Health Statistics). In Pima County, the rate is closer to 40 percent.

The rate of separation for never married parents is unknown, but there is no reason to believe it is any better or worse than the rate at which married parents divorce. Divorce rates vary across the country but are referred to as between 40 and 50 percent with Arizona being above the national average. Pima County Superior Court data from January 1991 to June 1999 shows that the number of paternity cases (family situations where the parents are not married) handled by the Pima County Superior Court system is steadily increasing. The number of paternity cases ordered into mediation has increased significantly while the number of divorcing parents ordered into mediation has slightly declined. As of this printing, nearly a quarter of all custody/visitation mediation cases at the Family Center of the Conciliation Court involve cases in which the parents are not married to each other. This growing segment of the population poses its own set of unique challenges that children and parents must face. Some of these families do not differ significantly from those who are married in that they have been living together as a family for years. Other unmarried parents, however, find themselves dealing with someone who they may barely know, let alone trust. Children of parents who have never been married to each other have the same needs for a safe, regular, predictable and conflict-free family life as do children who come from a family of parents who have been married to each other.



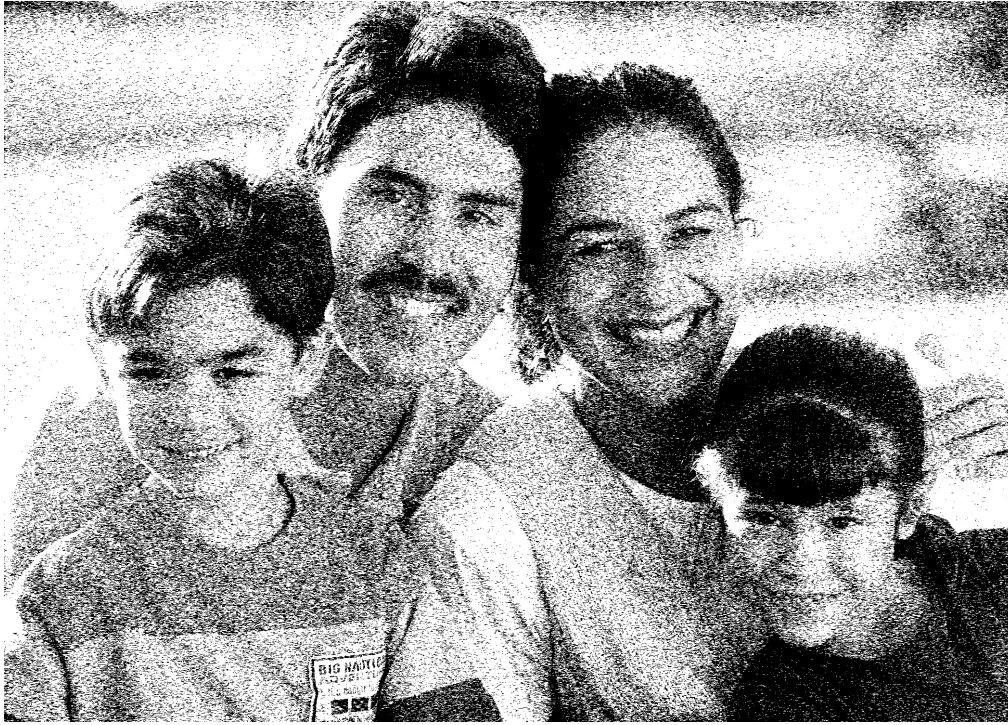
---

The development of a child care plan in which the needs of the children come first should be the guiding principle. Child care plans that gradually increase the amount of time a parent and child spend together are frequently used to reintroduce a parent into a child's life after a disruption has occurred.

The first principle is the safety and well-being of all concerned, whether or not the parents have been married to each other. Neither child nor parent benefits from a relationship involving neglect, abandonment or abuse. Mediators specializing in custody/visitation problems of divorce and paternity can provide parents assistance in developing child care plans. Interested parents can check with their local court system, bar association, mental health association or the yellow pages of the phone book for additional information regarding mediation resources.

## PART I: HELPING YOUR CHILDREN ADJUST TO DIVORCE

---



The following contains essays, articles and lists for parents (and extended family members) to aid them in their attempts to provide information, advice and comfort to their children. Not all of the articles may apply to any given family. Parents (and family) are encouraged to read this information and use it where it applies.

## TELLING THE CHILDREN

---

No age is too young to know about a pending divorce. Children old enough to acknowledge the existence of parents should be told something about the parents' breakup. What children are told depends on each child's age and level of understanding.

Do not assess blame. Blaming indirectly asks children to choose sides and to label one parent good and one bad.

Explain clearly and directly that divorce is between the parents. This will quiet the almost universal fear that, if parents can divorce each other, then they can also divorce their children. Emphasize that they did not cause the divorce and, therefore, cannot bring the parents back together.

Give children some idea of what they may expect in the future. Be realistic and focus on areas of most concern, such as possible changes in their living arrangement or school.

Encourage your children to ask questions. (They may have questions for a long time.)

## **"LITTLE PITCHERS HAVE BIG EARS"**

**by Milt Hardin, M.A.**

---



"Little pitchers have big ears." My mother used to say this to other grown-ups whenever she noticed that the children were listening to adult level conversation. The grown-ups would all look at the children and inevitably send the children from the room or change the subject. In her wisdom, my mother knew that there were many things that were not appropriate for children to overhear. She took her role as parent seriously. She protected her children from having to prematurely deal with distressing, disturbing or salacious matters for which we were not prepared. In the heat of a divorce, strong feelings of anger, hurt, betrayal and rejection are normal. Depression and anxiety are commonplace. Ex-spouses wonder what went wrong. Family members provide consolation.

Friends rally in support. It is easy in this highly charged atmosphere to forget about the presence of the children. Sometimes the adults may even seek out the children to talk about their feelings. They may believe that the children deserve to know "the truth," but what they have forgotten is that children are the innocent victims of divorce. Most children do not want their parents to divorce and do not want to choose sides in the parental conflict.

Child experts have warned parents for some time about the possible negative effects of children being caught in the middle of parental conflict. Potential problems may include withdrawal, poor academic performances, disturbances in sleep, excessive worry and delinquency. Young children may develop fear of a parent. Older children will often feel they must choose a parent at the exclusion of the other parent. Regardless of the parental intent, whether to share "the truth" or to express frustration, the long-term effects of children exposed to negative comments about the people they love from the people they trust are devastating. Who will protect the children? Who will shoo them from the room or change the subject? Who will say, "Enough, the children have suffered enough?" That responsibility belongs to those who truly care about the well being of the children. Sometimes it is a parent, a grandparent or a stepparent, but someone needs to remember that "little pitchers have big ears."

## EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

---

### Pervasive sense of loss

Generally, children express feelings of sadness. Some children will have signs of depression such as sleeplessness, restlessness and difficulty concentrating.

### Anxiety

Most children worry that their basic needs will not be met. Many worry that they will be abandoned or left alone. They worry about money and their parents' emotional and physical health.

### Feeling Rejected

Children often feel rejected by one or both parents.

### Loneliness

Children frequently long for the absent parent. Children generally feel that they receive less attention from both parents during divorce.

### Anger

Children's behavior often reflects an increased sense of tension and anger which may be directed at either parent.

### Conflicted Loyalties

Many parents compete for their children's affection and loyalty. Children walk a tightrope, fearful that fun and closeness with one parent might be a betrayal of the other parent.

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF DIVORCE by Frances Bernfeld, M. Ed.

---

### DO

**Be** consistent in helping children realize and understand that the divorce will definitely occur.

**Deal** directly with the other parent about the children when needed.

**Reassure** children that you are not divorcing them and you will always be there for them.

**Keep** as much consistency in the children's routines as possible.

**Encourage** and foster a positive and loving relationship between the children and the other parent.

**Reassure** children that they did not cause the break up.

**Maintain** adult and parental roles.

**Allow** children to express negative feelings about the breakup in nondestructive ways.

**Reassure** children that they will be safe and cared for.

**Let** children know that they are loved and wanted.

**Seek** emotional support from other adults such as friends, professionals and community resources.

**Everything** that you can to have the best for the children's sake.

### DON'T

**Offer** false hopes of reconciliation.

**Put** children in the middle of adult conflicts or ask them to act as messengers or spies.

**Threaten** children with abandonment.

**Make** more changes than necessary in the children's lives during divorce.

**Make** negative comments about the other parent, the other parent's life-style, or the other parent's new partner.

**Blame** the children or accuse them of causing conflicts between the parents.

**Lean** on your children or allow them to take on parental roles.

**Ignore** or minimize the children's feelings.

**Assume** the children will know that you will always be there for them and keep them safe.

**Forget** that children may need to be reassured that you will always be there.

**Seek** primary emotional support from children. Do not ask them to serve as best friend, counselor or confidante.

**See** the divorce as an opportunity to "destroy" the other parent.

---

## DO

**Learn** from your mistakes so you do not repeat them in new relationships.

**Be** responsible for your divorce and remember it is your divorce, not your lawyer's, your family's or your friend's.

**Realize** that your children need an ongoing relationship with both parents.

**Allow** yourself and the children to face your losses and grieve.

**Remember** that now the children have a two-household family.

**Cooperate** with your ex-spouse for the sake of the children.

**Accept** that your children's two-household family may expand to include new people in their lives.

**Get** past your anger and get on with your life.

**Establish** a businesslike, co-parenting relationship with the other parent.

**Tell** your children about the divorce.

**Explain** how the divorce will change things in the children's lives.

**Encourage** the children to ask questions.

## DON'T

**Expect** major changes to happen all by themselves.

**Expect** that others can make decisions for you or know what is best for you and your children.

**Think** the children should choose sides.

**Expect** that you, the other parent and your children will get over this in a short time.

**Think** that the children no longer have a family.

**Allow** your personal feelings about your ex-spouse to get in the way of a working relationship.

**Forget** that children can love more than one adult. There is room in the lives of children for grandparents, stepparents, aunts and uncles, as well as other significant adult role models.

**Dwell** on revenge and getting even.

**Believe** that all-out war is inevitable and cannot be avoided.

**Be** explicit about sharing adult information that would be inappropriate.

**Pretend** that nothing will change.

**Withdraw** and stop talking with your children.

---

## DO

**Support** the children's relationship with the other parent and the other parent's family (regardless of whether child support is being paid).

**Maintain** a consistent relationship with the children.

**Take** responsibility for the financial, emotional and physical well-being of the children (regardless of whether you get to see them).

**Allow** the children to be free to love both of their parents.

**Avoid** putting the children in the middle.

## DON'T

**Make** negative statements about the other parent or allow the children to make negative statements about the other parent.

**Drop** out of the children's lives.

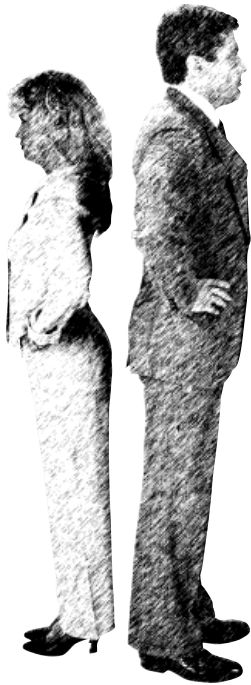
**Add** financial stress to the other stresses the children are going through (especially if it is just to punish the other parent).

**Expect** the children to choose one parent over the other.

**Use** the children as messengers or spies in the other parent's home.







### SPECIAL NOTE ON PARENTAL CONFLICT:

*The most consistent finding in studies on children's reactions to divorce is that unresolved parental conflict expressed in front of the children has negative consequences for all age groups—consequences that can be long-standing.*

*Avoid repeated expressions of anger toward the other parent in front of the children, even if talking on the phone or to family members or friends. Express anger and other negative emotions away from the children and seek professional help if necessary.*

## PART II: CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

---



The following contains the current information on the development of children and how their developmental needs might impact on their adjustment to a divorce. Parents (and family) are encouraged to read not only the information that applies to their children's current developmental ages, but also the information for the upcoming developmental ages in order to better plan for the future of the children.

## BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS (Early/Later Infancy)

---



### **Bonding and the Development of Trust**

The ability of a person to feel trusting of other people is one of the first social skills to develop in life. This ability begins in infancy and continues to strengthen throughout life, but the first two years of life are a very important time in the development of trust.

Infants form trusting bonds with the important people in their environment. How and with whom the bonds are formed depends upon the amount of time and the quality of caretaking provided rather than whether the caretaker (parent or other) is male or female. The ability of infants to develop trusting relationships with others depends upon their success in establishing these bonds.

### **Providing for Physical Needs**

Infants in this age range need a great deal of time, attention and patience from caretakers. Newborn infants need total care. By about age 1-1/2, they are able to walk, provide some self-care and use limited language.

### **Parenting Considerations**

A large time commitment is required of the caretakers.

The child's first bonds will be with the person or persons who provide(s) the most regular and steady child care.

Stranger anxiety may occur between 5 months and 10 months. It is a normal stage of development and shows that children can tell the difference between familiar and unfamiliar persons.

Children are able to understand more than they can express verbally.

Meeting the needs of children is the main parenting task during this age.

Establishing predictable and consistent routines for children is critical for healthy development.

Children at this age can sense the tension when parents are fighting but cannot understand the reasons for the conflict. Emotional memories of serious and repeated conflict in front of infants can have harmful effects in later years.

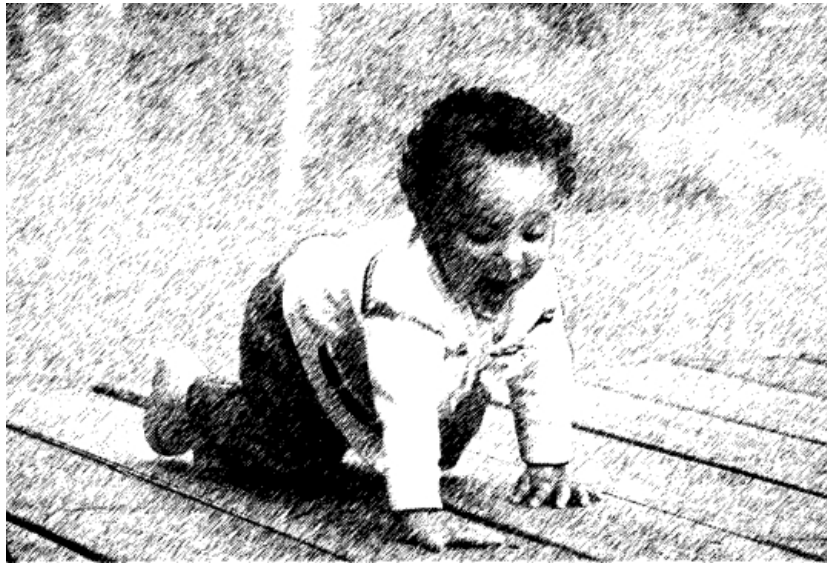
---

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Appear nervous, fretful or listless
- Seem fussy and reactive when parents are upset
- Exhibit symptoms of failure to thrive such as low weight gain, diminished growth, unresponsiveness
- Exhibit delays in development

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Spend time holding and cuddling child
- Provide for basic needs of child
- Consult with child's doctor as needed
- Follow a consistent routine for stability and security
- Avoid isolation, seek support from others



# 18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS (Toddler)

---

## **Personality Development**

At this age, children are developing into unique individuals. Early in this period, they can be negative, contrary and demanding. At around age 2-1/2 to 3, they are talkative, able to show pride in personal achievements, and work hard to receive approval.

The “terrible twos” really begin at around 18 months of age. It is called this because it occurs in the second year of life. The purpose of this negative, contrary and demanding behavior is for children to develop independence. Parent-child problems may begin to develop in response to the “terrible twos.” A variety of parenting approaches may be used in dealing with children.

## **Social Development**

Children are beginning to find their place in the world. By age two, their primary bond with parents has expanded to include others. Interactions with other children of the same age begin in this age range.

At first children will compete with other children for the attention of adults. Later, children are better able to participate in side-by-side play.

## **Parenting Considerations**

The negative, contrary or demanding behaviors of children in this age range are more likely due to normal development rather than any questionable parenting by either parent.

Children at 1-1/2 to 2 years will be more concerned about getting immediate needs met than about the parents’ breakup. However, they will notice conflict between the parents and will often appear afraid and nervous. They may act out but not talk about their anxiety.

Children need to know that they will be cared for by parents and others. Rather than just trying to reassure with words, parents also need to show them with actions.

The most common sign of stress for children at this age is a return to younger behaviors. This is not necessarily problematic but rather a way of seeking safety.

Children near three years of age may feel responsible for the parents’ breakup, but not be able to talk about it.

---

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Regress to earlier behaviors such as tantrums or bed-wetting
- Appear moody, withdrawn
- Appear fearful
- Demand unusual amounts of attention
- Exhibit unusual changes in sleeping and eating patterns

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Consult with child's doctor
- Follow a consistent, predictable routine for stability and security
- Offer verbal and physical assurance of love and protection
- Set limits and provide consistent follow through



## 3 YEARS TO 5 YEARS (Preschool)

---



### **Different Ways of Thinking**

These children are in the process of developing higher level thinking skills. They can appear to be quite sophisticated, especially verbally, yet still confuse reality and fantasy. For them, dreams can come

true, as well as thoughts, feelings and wishes. They have an exaggerated belief in their own power and this belief can be a problem for children who either feel responsible for the divorce or powerless to stop it.

Children often feel responsible for the parents' divorce. They may assume that their thoughts, feelings, or misbehavior caused their parents' divorce.

### **External Source of Stability**

Children develop an inner sense of security from the stability of the environment. Unlike adults, they may be unable to understand that the distress in the family is temporary and not connected to them at all.

### **Parenting Considerations**

How parents and other significant people in the children's lives handle the divorce will affect how the children will adjust.

Children will feel secure if their world is stable and predictable. As few changes as possible should be made in the child's world during a divorce. Necessary changes should be introduced gradually, allowing them time to adjust. How quickly children adjust will depend on each child's ability to cope with change.

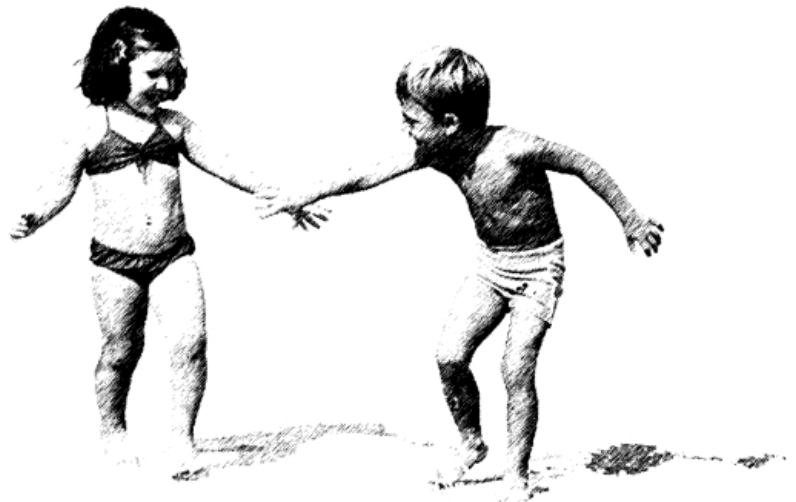
---

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Persist in wishful thinking that the divorce is not happening
- Do not understand the concept of divorce
- Do not understand the concepts of time or cause and effect
- Do not want to separate from parents
- Express fear that one or both parents will not return
- Regression to earlier behaviors such as tantrums, thumb-sucking, bed-wetting
- Feels responsible for the divorce, may assume being "bad" caused one parent to leave
- Attempt to control environment and/or others as a way to create security
- Express fears which appear unrelated to the divorce

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Offer verbal and physical assurance of love and protection
- Offer repeated reassurance that parent (and other family members) will return
- Read age-appropriate books on divorce with the child
- Provide age appropriate information and simple explanations (repeatedly)
- Help child to verbalize feelings such as fear, sadness, anger
- Help child talk about nightmares and other frightening experiences





## 5 YEARS TO 11 YEARS (Elementary School)

---

### **The Need for Family and Belonging**

These children are most concerned about issues related to their family. They use the family stability as an "anchor" from which to go out and explore the world. When a divorce occurs during this time, it is very difficult for the child to accept. The primary fantasy of most children of divorce is that their parents will get back together. This fantasy is especially strong for children in this age range.

Elementary-school-aged children are building social skills and academic abilities. Having a dependable family from which to explore the world helps in this process.

When a divorce occurs, children feel the loss of a secure foundation. This security can be rebuilt through time though children do not understand this and may express profound feelings of loss.

Seven- and eight-year-olds are developmentally at the age where issues of family and belonging are most important. This is the age when children seriously inquire about where they came from and whether or not they were adopted. They are excited about participating in family projects or outings. Accepting and adjusting to the changes in the family that divorce brings may be very difficult for these children.

No matter how much children know that the parents will not get back together, they may secretly wish that this would happen. All the many reasons that parents break up do not justify, in the children's minds, the necessity of divorce.

In their desire for reunification of the family, children will attempt to get the parents to interact with each other, either positively or negatively. In the children's way of thinking, it is better for the parents to be fighting than having no contact at all.

### **Fear of Abandonment**

Children who have developed a normal, healthy bond with their parents experience a fear of being abandoned by them. This fear is part of normal development and usually indicates a strong positive attachment and dependence upon the parents. Many behaviors during this time are attempts to ensure that the parents still want them and are not planning to leave them. Sometimes children will try to reject the parents out of fear of being rejected and may announce in anger that they want a divorce from a parent. During divorce these children need a great deal of reassurance from the parents that they will not be abandoned.

Children at five to seven are still extremely basic in their thinking, and have not yet developed adult-level thinking abilities. When parents divorce, these children begin to fear that maybe the parents will also divorce them. They need to be constantly reminded that parents are not married to them and, therefore, cannot divorce them. These children also worry that the parents will get angry and no longer want them. Parental threats of leaving children or not wanting them must never be used.

---

## Parenting Considerations

Children at this age are aware of what is happening in the family, but do not have any ability to control it. Their awareness of family standards and practices as well as the differences between their own and other families indicates growing family awareness and involvement.

These children often have a difficult time accepting the fact that things are no longer the way they used to be. They may blame the parent whom they think is responsible for the divorce.

As a general rule, the more children can maintain a sense of family throughout divorce, the better they will adjust. Parents' attempts to eliminate the children's fantasies of getting back together will be resisted by the children. Even the slightest bit of cooperation between parents may be misinterpreted.

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Feel torn between both parents
- Preoccupied with feelings of anger, loss, guilt, rejection, sadness and loneliness
- Worried about never seeing one parent or the other
- Feel responsible for the divorce
- Believe one parent doesn't love them anymore
- Angry at one parent for making other parent leave
- Fantasize that absent parent will return

- Anxious when schedule for contact with each parent is unpredictable
- Blame one parent for the divorce
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Experience intense longing for absent parent
- Take on adult roles, feel protective of parents
- Feel deprived and are often more demanding and uncooperative
- Have difficulty sharing time or possessions
- Maintain wish, often unspoken, for parents' reconciliation
- Try to control others and/or situations
- Fearful of being abandoned or replaced by parent's new partners or new siblings

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Accept and encourage the child's feelings
- Allow child time to handle feelings
- Use play activities to bring out feelings
- Assist child in expressing anger appropriately
- Set structure and routine
- Avoid power struggles
- Develop predictable visitation schedule
- Support child's relationship with other parent and family members
- Be available and give permission to talk about what is happening
- Continue to offer reassurance
- Do not offer false hopes of reconciliation
- Give permission for child to love both parents

## 11 YEARS TO 14 YEARS (Middle School/Junior High)

---



### **Increasing Importance of School/Friends**

Children at this age are accelerating the process of moving away from parents. Many behaviors are meant to put both emotional and physical distance between them and the family. They become more comfortable with interactions outside the home. Family activities are often replaced at this time with peer activities. Around age eleven, they tend to be more interested in teachers and classmates than in the family. In the early teens, they are usually more influenced by friends and their friends' parents.

Eleven year olds tend to be extremely critical of parents. By age fourteen, children often feel parents are an embarrassment. Further embarrassment about the parents' separation and divorce is normal. Children often may not mention the parents' breakup to friends, but instead confide in a trusted teacher who will be sworn to secrecy.

Middle school-aged children will generally resist a new partner in the life of one of their parents. They will make the introduction of new partners very difficult since their sense of family will not easily be altered. At this age, they are very aware of what may be happening in their parents' lives, including areas of sexuality, to which they may be extremely sensitive and unaccepting.

### **Parenting Considerations**

Young teens will be concerned about how a separation/divorce will affect their school and social activities. Even though these children may appear to be more focused on their own needs, parents should be aware they still care about what is happening with the family. The hope continues that parents will get back together again.

Increasing awareness of sexuality and relationship issues makes the introduction of parents' new partners into the lives of teens more difficult.

Custody/time sharing plans need to take into consideration the many school and social activities that young teens may have.

In addition to talking to teens, parents should also encourage teens to talk to trusted adults about feelings they are experiencing regarding the parents' separation/divorce.

---

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Exhibit increased reliance on peers
- Feel anger at parents for the divorce and the disruption this causes
- May blame one parent for the divorce
- Often side with one parent against the other
- Experience feelings of powerlessness, anxiety, loneliness, insecurity, shame and embarrassment
- Worry that family situation may affect peer relationships
- Engage in acting-out behaviors such as truancy, lying, stealing, poor school performance
- Attempt to be the perfect child
- Upset by and unaccepting of parents' social/dating/sexual behavior
- Express rigid, "either-or" type thinking
- Are sensitive and reactive to parents in conflict
- Worry about parents making it through the divorce
- Attempt to provide love, care and companionship to parents
- Experience physical reactions such as stomachaches or headaches
- May be involved in premature sexual behavior
- May play absent parent's role in family

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Encourage appropriate expression of feelings
- Encourage physical exercise and other appropriate releases of emotion
- Be available and provide permission to talk about what is happening
- Provide non-judgmental explanation of divorce
- Promote access to both parents and families
- Allow child to talk with someone outside the family about the divorce
- Offer physical and emotional reassurance
- Provide stable home environment
- Maintain parent role with child
- Reassure child that parent is in charge
- Give child permission to be a child
- Discourage child from taking on absent parent's role
- Be appropriate within the home, seek privacy for adult time and activities
- Give permission for child to love both parents
- Allow child input in custody/visitation plans while maintaining parental responsibility for the final decision

# 14 YEARS to 18 YEARS (High School)

---



## **Independence Versus Guidance**

One of the most important tasks of the later teen years is to adequately prepare for leaving home. Teens emotionally and physically withdraw in stages from the family. For most older teens, school, work and friends

come before family. They will often insist on privacy and/or demand that they be allowed to make their own decisions in areas that usually have been made by the parents. One of the more difficult tasks for parents is balancing the older teenager's needs for both independence and guidance.

Teenagers have similar developmental skills as adults in abstract thinking and language, but do not have comparable skills in emotional and moral development. They still require guidance from parents, although the guidance will not necessarily be requested nor appreciated.

Many choose not to get involved in the separation or divorce. Others will get overly involved in the parents' relationship.

When caught in the middle of the parental conflict, older teens are more likely to side with one parent and try to end the relationship with the other parent for what may appear to be trivial or unrelated reasons.

It is important that older teens be reminded by both parents of the importance of family and the need for balance. In order to respect the teens' needs for independence, parents should consult with them regarding living arrangements, visitation schedules and family plans.

## **Parenting Considerations**

When there is more than one child in a family, each child may side with a different parent. Parents should encourage teens not to choose sides and to continue to have a relationship with both parents.

When making custody/time sharing plans, parents should take into account the school, work, sports and social activities of each child.

---

## Possible Reactions of Children

- Appear capable beyond age level
- Can understand and adapt to what is going on with sufficient structure and guidance
- Seek encouragement from peers
- Often do not express doubts and uncertainties about the future
- Display heightened sexual and aggressive behaviors
- Are extremely reactive to feelings of anger, betrayal, sadness, loss and abandonment
- Feel rejected and neglected
- Frightened by parents' neediness
- Upset by parents' confusion
- Overly concerned about parents' dating and sexual behavior
- Fearful and mistrustful of intimacy
- Concerned about money and impact on life-style
- Resentful that their lives have been complicated by the divorce
- Feel embarrassment and shame about the changes in the family

## Recommended Responses for Parents

- Encourage expression of feelings
- Provide appropriate structure and guidance
- Provide encouragement and support
- Develop adult support system so child can be free of adult role
- Maintain parental role with child
- Provide clear limits and boundaries
- Encourage child to get on with own life
- Provide verbal and physical reassurance of continued love and support
- Give permission for child to love both parents and encourage relationships with other family members
- Be appropriate within the home, seek privacy for adult time and activities
- Allow child input in custody/visitation plan while maintaining parental responsibility for the final decision

## DEVELOPING A PARENTING PLAN—AN OVERVIEW

By Milton Hardin, M.A. and Ford Nicholson, M.S.

---

Parents often wonder how to best go about putting together a parenting plan for the children including the legal decision making and a time sharing plan. One parent might believe that the needs of the children should be the most important factor in setting up legal custody and time sharing. The other parent may feel strongly that the ability of the parents to get along and work cooperatively is the most important factor. Parents' work schedules, children's activities, family religious beliefs and traditions and past parental relationship issues are some of the common factors that people will claim should be the most important in determining a future parenting plan.

In truth, there is no single factor that should be used in developing a parenting plan. The following formula may help in determining the plan that is best for your situation:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Child's Developmental Needs} \\ + \\ \text{Child's Unique and Individual Needs} \\ + \\ \text{Parental Relationship Qualities} \\ + \\ \text{Family Life-style and Traditions} \\ = \\ \text{Your Specific Custody/Time Sharing Plan} \end{array}$$

The previous section of this booklet details some of the differences in children's needs based on their stage of development. It is pretty clear that the developmental needs of a 5 year old are not the same as the needs of a 15 year old. The section on children's developmental needs hopefully makes parents aware of some of those needs, but is only the first factor for consideration. The second factor is each child's unique and individual needs. Two 5 year old children may have the same developmental needs, but be very different children. One child may be very outspoken and adventurous. The other may be very shy and cautious. Children's temperament, coping skills, abilities and difficulties are all part of the second factor for parents to consider.

The third factor is the ability of the parents to work together in the best interest of the children. This factor, though always important, is frequently overlooked. Parents often want joint custody of their children, but are totally unwilling to communicate or cooperate with the other parent. Any type of joint custody will be difficult (and possibly even more detrimental to the children) if the parents are not willing and capable of working together. The history of power and control in the relationship, the influence of new partners or extended family and the ability of parents to put aside past grievances and focus on the children are all important parts of this third factor.

The final factor is family life-style and traditions. Included in this factor are such considerations as

---

work schedules, geographic proximity, culture, and religious beliefs. Step families, extended family and other parental involvements are considered here. Parents often want the Court to consider one of these factors in making custody/visitation decisions. All of the above factors should be considered by parents in developing the specific parenting plan for the children.

### **Decision Making (Legal Custody)—The Basics**

Once all of the factors of the Parenting Plan Formula have been carefully considered, parents can turn their attention, more specifically, to the areas of custody generally known as legal custody and a time sharing arrangement (physical custody). Legal custody refers to how the decisions regarding certain major areas of a child's life, such as personal care, health care, education and religious training, will be made. A joint custody or a joint legal custody arrangement means the parents will work together to decide these matters. This type of arrangement means that neither parent can override or overrule the other parent. Parents should be aware that joint custody plans submitted to the Court to be made into an order may be more closely looked at than other types of plans due to the way the custody legislation is written. For example, in Arizona, parents must include in their plans a process for their own periodic review and a mechanism by which they will settle differences should serious disagreements arise regarding major areas of the plans such as personal care, health

care, education or religious training. A sole custody arrangement means that one parent will have the final say with regard to the four areas listed above. It is expected that whether parents have joint or sole custody, the routine decisions in a child's life will be made by the parent with whom the child is residing at the time. A sole custody arrangement does not mean that one parent can tell the other parent when, where or how time with the children is to be spent. These decisions require a separate discussion.

### **Time Sharing (Physical Custody)—The Basics**

The time sharing arrangements of a Parenting Plan are commonly referred to as physical custody. It is comprised of a residential plan, a vacation plan and a holiday plan. The residential plan establishes the regular, predictable arrangements for the children that can be changed if the parents agree. However, these plans should not be so flexible and spontaneous that the children become confused and uncertain regarding their living arrangements. Safe, regular and predictable are the key elements of any time sharing plan. The following examples are meant to show the range of possibilities. Each one has its positive and negative sides:

- **Share the Week:** A specific number of days each week spent with each parent.
- **Alternate Specific Time Periods:** A specific number of weeks or months spent with each parent.



- 
- **Primary residence** with one parent and specific, regular time with the other parent.
  - **Gradually increase the amount of time spent with a parent:** This is an arrangement that can be useful when there has been a disruption in the parent/child relationship.

Vacation plans are the agreed upon amounts of time that each parent is allowed to use each year as he or she so desires to have extended time with the children. It is a good idea for parents to give each other advance notice of their vacation plans, and to include a way to get in touch with each other should an emergency arise. Many parents also have an understanding that the children will have phone contact with the non-vacating parent during vacations of extended time.

Holiday plans are the specific arrangements made for the important dates that represent family celebrations. These celebrations, when positive, contain the traditions and customs that are part of the "glue" that help children feel connected to their families. It is important that holidays be shared in such a way that the children experience, in each household, some of the glue that comes with positive family celebrations. First, make a list of the

important days of celebration in your family. Next, decide one by one the best way to handle each holiday. While it might seem like a good idea to simply divide each holiday this may not work very well for a child's birthday that falls during the school year. The amount of time between the end of a parent's work day and the child's bedtime may not be enough time for the child to enjoy time with each parent. Following are some examples of different ways that holidays can be shared:

- **Divide:** Part of the holiday with each parent.
- **Set:** Mother's Day/Mother's Birthday always with her and Father's Day/Father's Birthday always with him.
- **Alternate:** Specific holidays will alternate between the parents from year to year.
- **Split and Rotate:** The first portion of the child's Winter/Christmas Break, including Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with one parent; the second portion, including New Year's Eve and New Year's Day spent with the other parent. Reverse these arrangements the following year.

## **VIOLENCE IN THE HOME AND ITS EFFECT ON CHILDREN**

**By Frances Bernfeld, M.Ed. and Ford Nicholson, M.S.**

---

Violence in the family includes emotional and verbal as well as physical abuse. Children who are exposed to such violence are always affected. Shame, denial and fear often allow such abuse to go unrecognized by others as well as by the victims. Many people are not even aware that they have experienced abuse in their families growing up, whether from parents, brothers and sisters or witnessed between the parents.

Exposure to family violence can have significant negative effects on children's emotional, social and cognitive development. These effects may include:

- Aggressive behavior and other conduct problems
- Depression and anxiety
- Lower levels of social competence and self-esteem
- Poor academic performance
- Symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder, such as emotional "numbing," increased arousal, and repeated focus on the violent event\*

Children who witness physical abuse are traumatized by the experience. Children may be injured during an assault even if they are not the intended targets of the violence. They may experience trauma from witnessing (or even hearing) screaming, yelling, objects being thrown or name-calling in the

home. Children can be affected by seeing injuries resulting from a battering they didn't actually witness. At the core of domestic violence are matters of power and control of another person. Children can sense the tension and hostility in the home when this is present.

Children will tend to copy their parents actual behaviors even when their parents tell them not to get into fights with other children. As they grow up, they learn that it is all right to use power and control to influence the ones they love rather than find healthier and better ways of getting their needs met. Children who grow up around abuse and violence can also experience emotional problems both in childhood and later in life. They can develop unrealistic fears and anxieties, poor self-esteem and low feelings of confidence and self-worth.

There are essentially two types of violence and abuse in relationships. One is an ongoing part of the relationship and is more severe, even if it happens only occasionally. This can include physical battering, attempts to control the victim's life, how money is spent, how and with whom time is spent and general control of personal freedom. The other kind of violence usually happens during the end of the relationship and during separation. In this case, either or both people may be violent or abusive, but the behavior is related to stress caused by the break-up, rather than an ongoing pattern which becomes increasingly more dangerous throughout the marriage.

---

\* *The Future of Children*, Vol. 9, No.3—Winter 1999

---

In spite of the type of violence the children are exposed to during the relationship, it is obvious that they need to remain free from conflict as well as from the experience of ongoing abuse after the separation. In most cases it is very important for children to have a continuing relationship with both of their parents after the separation. They also need to be protected from any parent, other relative, guardian or caretaker who may abandon, abuse or neglect them or keep exposing them to violence and abuse in the home.

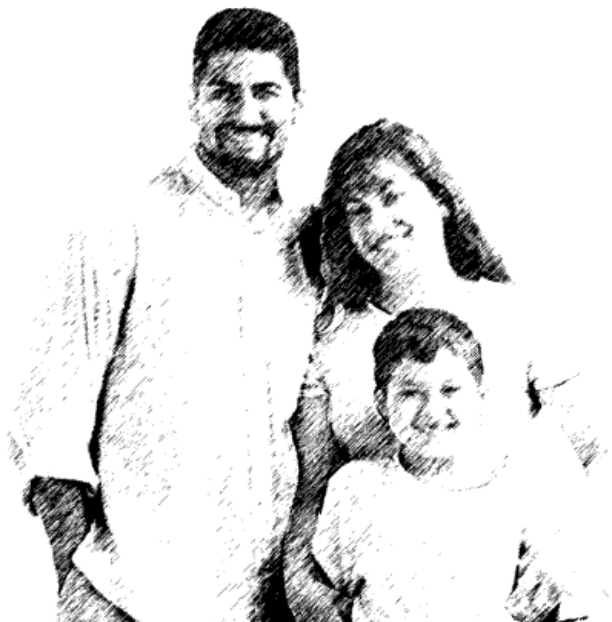
Parents who have trouble controlling their own anger and frustration can benefit from counseling. For those who are victims of abusive relationships, resources may provide services such as shelters and educational programs. The court system can provide for restraining and protection orders and legal information and assistance. The National Domestic Violence Hotline answers calls 24 hours a day and provides crisis help and information about shelters, legal advocacy, health care centers and counseling. The number is 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or 1-800-787-3224 for the hearing impaired.



## CHILDREN, DIVORCE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

by David Gooden, ACSW, CISW

---



The developmental stages of children and the parenting strategies described in this booklet represent the point of view of the mainstream U.S. culture. However, it is important to recognize that many cultural variations do exist within the United States, variations that in many cases have been essential to survival.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> The following examples are not intended to explain each group's experience, but to alert the reader that one's unique cultural heritage may suggest important differences from the recommendations in this booklet.

One example of these cultural variations is the degree to which other family members besides the biological parents are involved in the life of the child (including during the divorce process). In many Native American communities grandparents have a central role in parenting.<sup>5</sup> Mexican

American parents are also assisted by extensive involvement of relatives throughout the child raising process, not only by those related by blood and marriage, but also by godparents (*compadres*).<sup>6</sup> African American parents are often actively aided, not only by extended family,<sup>7</sup> but also by other families<sup>8</sup> and church leaders.<sup>9</sup> These extended family relationships can be extremely helpful as a source of support to parents and children during the divorce process.

In terms of the stages of child development referred to in this booklet, the older teen stage of development *Ages 14 to 18, High School* is most likely to display cultural variations. While the expectations of many groups are that teens will become more and more "independent" during this stage of development, to the point where they "leave home," other groups emphasize the continuity of family membership and family unity, even during the process of establishment of one's own "nuclear family."

For example, "British American families are likely to feel that they have failed if their children *do not* move away from the family and become independent, whereas Italians generally believe they have failed if the children *do* move away."<sup>10 (p.18)</sup> Among Asian Americans and Latino families in the United States, it is quite common to see young people living with their parents until they themselves marry.

---

Some authors have described this type of relationship as “extended dependency”; others reject the concept of “independence” as the goal of every culture in favor of “interdependence.”

### Summary

In summary, differences exist between cultures in regard to child development, parenting issues and parenting styles. These differences need to be recognized and valued. Parents need to feel free to parent within their own cultural traditions. Interpreting the world in terms of one’s own culture helps parents (especially people of color) raise children who can cope in a world in which, for example, racial prejudice is a fact of life.<sup>11 (p.2)</sup>

While taking into account the importance of these differences, however, children across cultures whose parents are divorcing benefit greatly when their parents and parent figures can communicate with each other regarding parenting issues. Building that communication is a very positive step parents can take, regardless of culture.

- 
1. Black, L. (1996). Families of African Origin: An Overview. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
  2. Sutton, C. T. & Broken Nose, M.A. (1996). American Indian families: An overview. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.

3. Hines, P. M. & Boyd-Franklin, N. (1996). African American Families. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.) New York: The Guilford Press.
4. Comas-Diaz, L. (1996) LatiNegra: Mental health issues of African Latinas. In M. P.P. Root (Ed.), *The multiracial experience*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.
5. Sutton, C.T. & Broken Nose, M.A. Op cit., p. 36.
6. Vélez-Ibáñez, C. G. (1996). *Border visions: Mexican cultures of the Southwest United States*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
7. Isaacs, M. B. & Leon, G. H. Race, marital dissolution, and visitation: An examination of adaptive family strategies. In C. A. Everett (Ed.), *Minority and ethnic issues in the divorce process*. New York: Haworth Press.
8. Hines, P. M. & Boyd-Franklin, N. (1996). African American families. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
9. Fine, M. A. & Schwebel, A. I. (1988). An emergent explanation of differing racial reactions to single parenthood. In C. A. Everett (Ed.), *Minority and ethnic issues in the divorce process*. New York: Haworth Press.
10. McGoldrick, M. & J. Giordano (1996). In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press. p. 18.
11. McGoldrick, M. & J. Giordano (1996). In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press. p.2.

## Part III: RESOURCES

---



The following contains inserts of general interest to this booklet—annotated bibliography, videos, internet sites, references, etc. Additional inserts specific to References, Laws, Practices or Community Resources in whatever jurisdiction or agency in which this booklet is utilized may be added.

---

## Internet sites

*The Internet opens up a world of information and sources of information for adults and children dealing with divorce. Web sites have been developed that provide discussions, essays and helpful tips on coping with divorce for both adults and children. The latest books and tapes (both audio and video) can be previewed and even ordered over the Internet.*

*There are many helpful Internet sites that come and go on most services (e.g., America Online, Netscape).*

Information related to Divorce, Children and Divorce and Coping with Divorce is usually contained in sections titled "Family", "Lifestyles" or "Home." Consult your individual web services regarding the best ways to access information from the Internet.

Some Internet sites related to children and divorce, with additional links:

<http://family.go.com/> (Divorce: Helping Children Deal with the Pain)

<http://www.wholefamily.com/> (Whole Family Center)

<http://www.smartdivorce.com> (Smart Divorce.com)

<http://www.divorcecentral.com/> (Divorce Central)

<http://www.divorce-online.com/> (Divorce Online)

## Video listings

*All of the following videos have been approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Arizona Supreme Court, for use in parent information programs involving a divorce. These videos are not available through Arizona's AOC; however, additional information regarding these videos, including ordering information, is available by calling (602) 542-9300 and asking for the Domestic Relations Division.*

**ABC News and Special Reports** (Available through ABC News at 1-800-225-5222)

*20/20 "Kids Turn"*—a 15-minute segment featuring children talking openly about their perspective on divorce/separation and the restructuring of the family.

*"Children Coping with Divorce"* and *"When Mom and Dad Split Up"* are two additional ABC 20/20 video segments which deal with divorce and its impact on children.

*"Children First (Real Kids, Real Solutions)"*—ABC Special Report: A 15-minute segment focusing on the parenting skills to aid in the healthy development of the early years of children (ages birth through 3 years old). This piece does not distinguish between single parent families or married parents.

**ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS:** The following videos are available through this organization (AFCC); 6515 Grand Teton Plaza, Suite 210 Madison, WI 53719, (608) 664-3750; Fax (608) 664-3751

*"Children in the Middle"*—Vignettes showing common ways children are caught between their parents at the time of and after the divorce. Produced by the Center for Divorce Education, P.O. Box 5900, Athens, OH 45701, (614) 593-1065 or 593-1074.

*"Children—The Experts on Divorce"*—Children speak from their own experience which corresponds with the bulk of the research findings related to what children need from their parents in a divorce.

## ADDITIONAL VIDEO LISTINGS

*"Healing Wounded Hearts"*—An extension of the material in *Children—The Experts on Divorce*. Available through the Family Connections Publishing Company, 575 E. 4500 South B-250, Salt Lake City, Utah 84107; (801) 268-2800.

*"Listen To the Child": (S.M.I.L.E.—Start Making It Liveable for Everyone)*—Children recount their understanding of their parents' divorce and how it has affected them. Experts provide age appropriate tools for parents to use with their children.

*"Pain Games"*—Vignettes showing the painful games played by parents that unintentionally put their children in the middle of their conflict. Available through the Johnson County Mental Health Center, 6000 Lamar, Suite 130, Mission, KS 66202.

*"The Single Parent Family"*—The perspectives of the child and the parents are portrayed during the break up and restructuring of the family and cover areas such as communication, anger management and how to access and use an intermediary if parents are unable to talk to one another initially.

---

## Books for children

### Preschool and Beginning Readers (Ages 2-8)

Cole, J. (1998). *How Do I Feel About My Parents' Divorce*. Brookfield, Connecticut: Copper Beech Books.  
(Grades K-4) Four friends talk about their parents' breaking up, and give advice to other children. Entertainingly illustrated with multicultural drawings, photos and cartoons. Can be read by parents and children together or by kids by themselves.

Mayle, P. (1988). *Why Are We Getting A Divorce?* New York: Harmony Books.  
(Grades K-3) A book for parents to read with children. Explains what happens in marriage and divorce, and the feelings both children and parents have. Illustrated.

Rogers, F. (1996). *Let's Talk About It: Divorce*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.  
(Grades P-2) A picture book about what is lost and what remains the same when their parents' divorce. For parents and children to read together.

Weitzman, E. (1996). *Let's Talk About Your Parents' Divorce*. New York: PowerKids Press.  
(Grades Preschool-1) A picture book for parents and children to look through and read together. Explains the facts of divorce in easy to understand language, with recommendations for coping.

### Elementary School Age (Ages 8-12)

Stern, Z. & Stern, E. (1997). *Divorce Is Not The End Of The World*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press.  
(Ages 8-12) Written by two kids (with the help of their mom) for other kids, to make sense of divorce. Many valuable suggestions for coping. Several sections could be read to younger children.

### Adolescence (Ages 12 and up)

Bolick, N. (1994). *How To Survive Your Parents' Divorce*. New York: Franklin Watts.  
Interviews with young people, ages 13-22, who have survived divorce. (Non-Fiction)

Danziger, P. (1998). *The Divorce Express*. New York: Delacorte.  
Resentful of her parents' divorce, a young girl tries to accommodate herself to their new lives and also find a place for herself. (Fiction)

Johnson, L. (1995). *Everything You Need To Know About Your Parent's Divorce*. New York: Rosen.  
A guide for teenagers to understand what happens to divorcing parents and to understand the feelings of everyone involved. (Non-Fiction)

Kremetz, J. (1996). *How It Feels When Parents Divorce*. New York: Knopf.  
Nineteen children and teens from divorce backgrounds share their deepest feelings about their parents' divorce. (Non-Fiction)

Stern, Z. & E. (1997). *Divorce Is Not The End Of The World*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press.  
A teen brother and sister, with divorced parents, discuss divorce and offer tips based on their experience. (Non-Fiction)





---

## Books for parents

Ackerman, M. J. (1997). *Does Wednesday Mean Mom's House Or Dad's House?* New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

This book coaches you on every aspect of the divorce, custody, and co-parenting process including how to act in your children's best interest. It shows how to work with the other parent in order to effectively parent together while living apart.

Lansky, V. (1996). *Vicki Lansky's Divorce Book For Parents: Helping Your Children Cope With Divorce And Its Aftermath.* Minnetonka, Minnesota: Book Peddlers.

The author gives advice to parents on how to help their children, know what normal behavior to expect, what language to use - and not use - and useful tips to get their children through this difficult time.

Ricci, I. (1997). *Mom's House, Dad's House: A Complete Guide For Parents Who Are Separated Divorced Or Remarried.* New York: Fireside.

Now a classic, this book illustrates how parents can make two home-parenting an acceptable option, post divorce. The book also has a very good section on how children tend to deal with divorce.

Schneider, M. F. & Zuckerberg, J. (1996). *Difficult Questions Kids Ask (And Are Too Afraid To Ask) About Divorce.* New York: Fireside.

This book explores the apparent and hidden fears that haunt children as they weather the painful confusion of a divorce. Teaching parents how to read between the lines helps parents tackle children's concerns in a question-and-answer dialogue format.

Wolfe, A. E. (1998). *Why Did You Have To Get A Divorce? And When Can I Get A Hamster?* New York: The Noonday Press.

This author makes the point that divorce, while difficult for children, does not have to do long-term damage to their emotional health, especially if their parents remain a source of positive support in their lives.

## Spanish language titles

### LIBROS PARA NIÑOS

#### La Edad de Primaria (Entre 8 hasta 12 años de edad)

Gardner, R. A. (1995). *Las Preguntas de los Niños Sobre el Divorcio.* Mexico, D. F. Editorial Trillas. (5 Grado y Arriba) Un libro bueno, para los niños y los padres. Se ofrece al niños apoyo fuerte para sus sentimientos, aviso en manejar la experiencia del divorcio. Traducido del ingles, de la perspectiva norteamericana.

Cleary, B. (1992). *Troton, Mi Perro.* Madrid. Espasa Calpe. (3 Grado hasta 6 Grado) Dos amigos comparten custodia (de su perro) y la experiencia de tener padres divorciados. Traducido del ingles, del punto de vista norteamericana.

#### Adolescencia (12 años y más)

Paulsen, G. (1996). *El Hacha.* Barcelona. Cuatro Vientos. (7 Grado y Arriba) Una historia poderosa de un joven norteamericano sobreviviendo un choque de avioneta y el divorcio de sus padres. Traducido del ingles.

Published by:

The Family Center of the Conciliation Court

32 N. Stone, Suite 1704

Tucson, Arizona 85701-1403

(520) 740-5590

First Printing, June 1992

Second Edition, March 2001

Published by:

The Family Center of the Conciliation Court

32 N. Stone, Suite 1704

Tucson, Arizona 85701-1403

(520) 740-5590

First Printing, June 1992

Second Edition, March 2001