

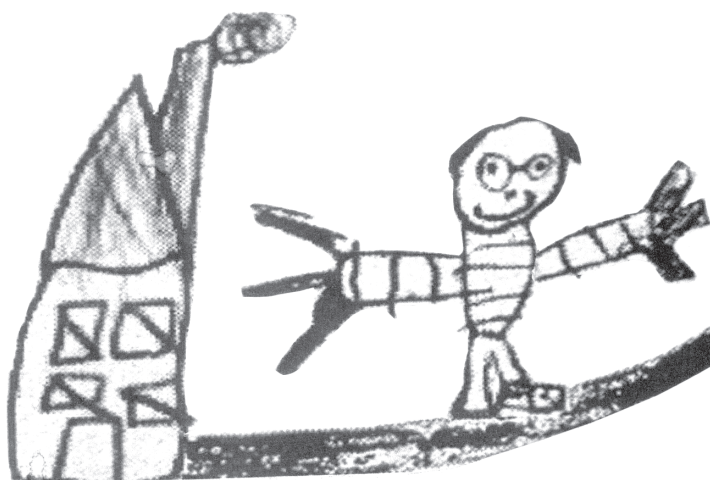


PACT

Parents and Children in Transition

*A program of the
Hampshire County
Bar Association*

Parent Handbook



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1. Introduction

This handbook is for mothers and fathers who live separately but share the parenting of their children. Most parents using this manual are in the process of divorce. Others are making changes in divorce agreements. Still others have never been married but are establishing custody, parenting plans and support agreements.

Children of divorce are at risk of developing problems. These problems can include lowered self-esteem, poor school performance, aggression, anxiety and depression, and lack of confidence in their, intimate relationships. When parents separate, the adjustment period for most children normally lasts two to three years. Some children eventually adjust to the changes in their families and go on to lead happy, productive lives. Others suffer for many years.

The goal of this handbook is to provide parents with information that will help them make decisions in the best interest of their children and ease the adjustment to divorce for everyone. This handbook will also be helpful to grandparents, child-care providers and others who love and care for your children.

2. Facts About Families

The face of the American family has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. Between 1970 and 1996, the number of divorces more than quadrupled, from 4.3 million in 1970 to 18.3 million in 1996.¹ Fewer than one in four households consists of married couples and their children.² Here are some facts about families today:

- Forty-three percent of couples marrying this year are projected to divorce within fifteen years, and that probability increases over time.³
- One in three babies in the United States is born to unmarried parents.⁴ In some regions, there are more court actions involving unmarried parents than divorcing parents.⁵
- One in four American children lives in a single-parent household. Nine times out of ten, these children live with their mother.⁶
- More than 90 percent of Americans can expect to be married at least once in their lives. After the first divorce, half can expect to remarry within three years.⁷
- There is a strong probability that the second marriage will end in separation or divorce (23 percent after five years and 39 percent after ten years).⁸

3. Telling Children About the Divorce

Children's adjustment to divorce depends on how both parents handle the divorce. Parents are role models and need to set good examples. Children imitate the behaviors and attitudes of their parents. It is easier for children to make a healthy adjustment when parents are able to put aside their anger and resentment and handle divorce in a mature and positive way.

- Tell your children about the divorce when parents are together, if possible.
- Plan as few changes in your children's lives as possible.
- Reassure your children that they are not to blame.
- Express your love and commitment to your children, and help them feel secure.
- Give your children details about their new situation—where they will live, where they will go to school, when they will be with each parent, when they will see friends and relatives, and how the new arrangements will affect their social and extracurricular activities. Young children may need a calendar or similar visual aid to help them understand the new schedules.
- Be prepared to give a simple explanation for the divorce. Avoid blaming the other parent.
- Answer your children's questions honestly, but avoid unnecessary details.
- Discuss divorce-related issues in terms children can understand. Try to avoid terms like "custody" and "visitation."
- Encourage your children to talk about the divorce and their feelings. Discuss problems openly. Be an emotional support for your children, but don't rely on them to be *your* emotional support.
- Accept your children's mood swings and emotional outbursts. Don't take them personally. Counseling or support groups may help children resolve their feelings.

- Help your children accept the reality of the divorce. Don't give them false hopes of reunion.
- Maintain your expectations of your children and their household responsibilities or chores, but don't expect them to take on adult or parental roles.
- Emphasize that only the adult relationship is changing: The special connection between a parent and child is forever. (This is true even when a parent cannot fulfill the parental role.)
- Approach changes in the family with a positive attitude. Speak hopefully about the future. Children need to know that you are strong and can take care of them.

4. Helping Children with Their Feelings

Separation or Divorce

When parents decide they can no longer live together, every member of the family is deeply affected. The loss suffered by parents and children is similar to the loss felt when a death occurs. In this instance, the death is of the family unit as everyone has known it. It takes a long time to adjust to separation or divorce. Some say it takes at least two years—two cycles of holidays, birthdays, vacations and other family events. Research shows that it takes some people much longer. Many people experience grief spasms throughout their lives. No matter how long it takes to adjust, most people have similar reactions as they go through the grief process.

When Parents Have Always Lived Apart

Some children have never lived with both parents together, or they don't remember that time. These children have to deal with a different kind of grief—the grief of never having had a two-parent household. They won't feel the shock and loss felt by other children at the beginning of a divorce, but may still experience sadness.

Children who spend time with both parents may experience turmoil every time they go back and forth from one to the other. Though the current family situation may be all they have ever known, these children need to talk about their feelings too.

Other children may never have known one of their parents. Though there may be no actual relationship to grieve, there is often an active relationship in the child's mind. In some cases this "internal" relationship is quite positive, and can be helpful for a child to maintain. For others the feelings are more negative. Parents can expect all children to experience ups and downs in their feelings about an absent parent.

Reach out to your children

Parents can help their children by talking and listening. Don't wait for your child to bring things up. Some children will not bring up anything they think will be difficult for their parents. It is up to the parents to open the doors for communication and sharing.

Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is a counseling tool that parents can use with children. It involves:

- turning to your child and paying attention
- genuinely accepting what the child feels
- rephrasing what the child is telling you
- reflecting these feelings back to the child
- after the child's feelings have been thoroughly explored, helping the child begin to solve problems that have come to light.

Older children may be able to speak clearly about their feelings, but the very young are more likely to communicate without words. In turn, parents can communicate not only by providing language but through physical comfort, eye contact, and tone of voice.

As the parent rephrases what children say, the children will often begin to give clues to their feelings. The parent's job is to hear and accept the feelings. This does not mean that aggressive or destructive behavior is allowed. Feelings and actions are not the same thing.

Reflective listening takes practice but is remarkably effective. It moves children toward healthy emotional development. It is especially useful when children are angry or in a power struggle.

Examples of reflective listening are included in the following discussion.

Working Through the Grief Process

When people suffer a serious loss, they usually experience a series of emotions that can be summed up as the grief process. This process often includes denial, anger, bargaining, sadness and eventually acceptance. The order, strength and duration of these feelings will vary from person to person. Individuals grieve in their own way, but most experience some or all of these feelings.

Denial

Denial is one way our minds protect us from emotional pain. It is a natural protective mechanism. Children may act as if everything is okay. They may deny having any feelings about changes in the family. Parents too may feel numb and unable to get in touch with their pain. Some busy themselves in a flurry of activity. Others

withdraw into a state of waiting.

What parents can do: Accept the denial but keep the door open for discussion, and then gently talk about feelings.

Parent: How are you doing with Mom and Dad living in separate homes? How does it feel?

Child in denial: It's OK. It's no big deal. I get to see Mom/Dad anyway.

Parent: Yeah. It's hard to believe that our family has changed this way. It sure would be easier if all of this would just go away. It's hard to face this right now.

When children are in denial, parents can help by speaking honestly but gently about the loss, the changes and the feelings. When parents can face these things, children will realize it is safe to begin to have feelings.

For younger children who can't talk about their feelings but show no reaction to the family changes, it is helpful to bring up the situation once in a while.

Parent: It sure is different around here without Daddy/Mommy. It feels kind of sad.

Or: It's different now that I don't live with you and Mom/Dad. Kids sometimes have sad or mad feelings when this happens.

Be prepared for responses of anger or bargaining when you tap into your child's denial. These often come up next in the recovery process.

Anger

Anger emerges as family members realize that the changes are real. Though anger can feel empowering, it is also a protective emotion. Like denial, it keeps away pain and sadness.

Children express anger in many ways, some obvious, some less so. They may begin testing limits, acting rebellious or flying off the handle over little issues. They may express anger through blaming, verbal attacks or physical actions. Often the anger about the family is directed toward siblings, other people or situations. Sometimes anger is expressed more passively, for example, through stubbornness or avoiding responsibilities.

If you notice that your child seems angry or is becoming aggressive, you can begin to talk about the sadness and fears that underlie the anger. It is best to talk when tempers have cooled.

What parents can do: Acknowledge the anger and don't take it personally. Be open to the underlying sadness as it is expressed. Use reflective listening.

Parent: Hey, you sure got mad when I asked you to pick up your clothes. That really got you going!

Child: You're always picking on me. You never leave me alone.

Parent (rephrasing and repeating back): It feels like I'm always on your case.

Child: You're bugging me all the time. You used to be nicer.

Parent (rephrasing and repeating again): You feel like I've changed.

Child: Before the divorce, you weren't so grouchy.

Parent (rephrasing and not taking it personally): It seems like I've been in a bad mood a lot.

Child (pauses, tears in eyes): I hate it. I hate it since the divorce.

Parent: Things have changed a lot. It makes you very mad and sad, too.

Child starts to cry. Parent comforts child.

Parent: What can we do to make it better here?

Child: You could say please when you want me to do something.

Parent: Good idea. I'll try to remember.

When children and adults begin to give up their anger, they will start feeling sad. After parents and children fully experience their sadness, they can move on to acceptance, problem solving and adjustment. This takes time, tears and talking.

Bargaining

Bargaining is another stage of grieving. Children may begin acting particularly helpful, hoping that if they are very good their parents will get back together. Adults may try to change their own behaviors unrealistically or ask the other parent to change in some impossible way.

What parents can do: Take responsibility for the situation. When you see that your child is doing or saying things to try to get the parents back together, it is helpful to speak up.

Parent: You would really like it if our family could go back to the way it was. It's not easy to have it this way. This is a decision that the grown-ups made, and this is the way it's going to be. But it's hard to live with sometimes, isn't it?

Be prepared for anger or sadness from your children when you make it clear that they can't change the situation. But, remember, anger and sadness are steps toward acceptance and adjustment.

Sadness

Sadness is inevitable when families change. Even if the change is a relief in some ways, the family grieves for the loss of their dream of being a happy family together.

What parents can do: The most important thing parents can do is acknowledge and accept the children's sadness and not try to "make it all better." This is very difficult for parents, yet very helpful to children.

Child: I miss my Daddy/Mommy. I want him/her now! (*Starts crying.*)

Parent: It's sad that your Daddy/Mommy isn't here all the time. (*Hold child and allow him/her to cry. After a time, suggest an activity that links child to other parent. Draw a picture for other parent, look at a photo album, write a letter, etc.*)

As parents are able to accept their children's pain, children are able to recover and move on.

Acceptance

Acceptance occurs after you and your children have had time to fully experience the different stages of the grief process. You and they have arrived at some level of acceptance when the fact of the loss is fully grasped and no longer brings on a cascade of emotion. It does not necessarily mean that you accept the divorce as a good thing but that life feels more stable and you have begun to face the future with some optimism.

A message of hope

As children are going through the normal pain divorce brings, remind them of other difficult situations that have gotten better over time. Help them remember that they can adjust to new situations. "Remember when you got braces last year and your mouth felt weird for days? Well, after a while it really wasn't a problem anymore, was it?" Or, "Remember when it felt so scary to go to your new school? But then you got used to it. Now it's OK." Children need to know that we believe in their ability to cope.

Topsy-Turvy Grieving

Most people do not experience the grief process in a nice, orderly fashion. One day you might feel numb, the next you might be in tears and then you might be furious for a week. After a year or two, you might feel you have arrived at acceptance, only to have an unexpected grief spasm when you come across some old photos or watch a sentimental commercial! This is all normal.

The “Back-and-Forth” Blues

Each time children go back and forth between parents, and each time parents say good-bye to their children, they experience grief. Children often feel angry or out of sorts before and after each transition. If long visits are scheduled, the upset feelings may emerge a few days before and after departure and arrival. Parents, too, may begin to feel short-tempered as the time approaches for the children to leave. Many parents feel sad and lost for a period of time after the children are gone.

What parents can do: When your children are about to arrive, plan to devote some uninterrupted time to them. During these transitions children need our sensitivity. Some need quiet time alone, some need cuddling, some need to engage in an activity or conversation with you. Others want to go out and play with friends but want you to be available later.

At the other end of the visit, as you prepare for your children’s departure, remember that short tempers usually cover up sadness. Explaining that it is hard to make these changes may defuse the feelings a bit: “Even though you want to see Mom/Dad, it’s sometimes sad to leave here.”

It is normal for children to be out of sorts at the time of transition from one parent to the other. Don’t jump to the conclusion that this means the visits to the other parent are not good. Upset feelings usually are a normal reaction to going back and forth. But if you are concerned, don’t grill the child for information right after the visit. This may cause the child to shut down. Wait a day or so and talk about the visit casually. See what comes up then. If a child persists in not wanting to visit one parent, professional help may be needed.

When To Get Help

If your child or you seem to be stuck in one stage of grief for more than a few months, and especially if your child or you are unable to manage the anger or sadness, consider professional help. This is especially important when there is unrelenting anger or violent interaction.

Seek help for children when:

- the child is in danger of hurting him/herself or others (seek help immediately)
- the child's regression to young behaviors shows no sign of decreasing
- nightmares or sleep problems continue
- problems with feeding or eating persist
- a lack of interest in social occasions, school, sports or family activities persists
- there is a noticeable drop in school performance
- relationships with friends, teachers or parents appear to be suffering.

Seek help for yourself when:

- you need a consultation about how you and/or the children are doing
- you feel you can't cope
- the parental conflict continues or gets worse
- you experience signs of depression for more than three weeks (signs include feelings of worthlessness, irritability or hopelessness; loss of energy; fatigue; sleeping or eating problems; and lack of interest or pleasure in usual activities)
- you are turning to your children to meet your emotional needs
- your mood swings, vulnerability or other emotions are getting in the way of effective parenting
- there is excessive use or abuse of alcohol or other mood-altering substances
- there is frequent use of the court system to solve problems.

Remember that the most harmful factor for children during and after a divorce is disruption in the parenting role.

5. Changing Your Family

Sharing the Children

When parents live apart, they must decide how to share the care of their children. It can be hard to sort out what is best for the children and what feels fair to the parents. When parents live apart and share parenting, they lose some time with their children and some control over them. This can be painful, but most families successfully adjust to their new situation.

Keep these points in mind as you work out plans for sharing the children:

- What is best for children will change as they mature and develop.
- What is best for children is to maintain as much stability and security as possible.
- What is best for children is to encourage strong, loving relationships with both parents, assuming safety is not an issue.

What is best for your children may not feel fair to you. But, remember, if appropriate and desired, parenting plans can evolve and change as your children grow.

General Guidelines for Parenting Plans

There are many issues to consider when making parenting plans. Each family and each child is unique, and there is no “right” way to share parenting time. Many plans support effective parenting. When developing a plan, think about the following factors:

- The age and special needs of each child
- The personality, flexibility and adaptability of each child
- The parenting histories—what is familiar to the child in terms of each parent’s involvement
- The proximity of the parents’ homes to the child’s school, friends, community activities, etc.
- The ability of each parent to function effectively. (Is there substance abuse, violence or a serious mental health problem? Is the parent reliable, and can he/she provide a safe environment?)

Developmental Factors in Parenting Plans

Parents should keep certain factors in mind regarding the developmental level of the children when establishing parenting plans.

- Infants and toddlers require predictability, consistency and routine. It is crucial not to disrupt a child's sense of safety, because this is the period of development when the foundations of basic trust and relationships are laid down for the future.
- Some infants have a strong attachment to one parent, a parent they seek when feeling insecure or needy, sometimes referred to as a "primary parent." Other children may have two or even more adults to whom they look to meet their day-to-day needs. When attachment to both parents is equal, it could be said that there are two primary parents. It is best to make arrangements for very young children that maintain the pre-divorce parenting plan, at least in the early months of the divorce.
- If there is only one primary parent, frequent short visits with the other parent may be ideal in the first year to eighteen months. Overnight visits may need to be limited in the first year of life in these situations.
- When there is one primary parent or residence, the time to start overnights with the other parent depends on the strength of the child's relationship with that parent, the nature of the divorce relationship, the child's adaptability and the presence or absence of siblings. Younger children do best on overnights when they are secure with the nonresidential parent, the divorce is amicable, the child is adaptable and siblings are present.
- For young children, long periods of time away from one parent and the resulting feelings of sadness and loss may be more challenging than shorter periods away and more frequent transitions.
- As children get older they can tolerate longer absences from one parent while with the other parent. Parenting plans can move toward equal time if the parents so desire. Children's understanding of time and place is usually developed enough by mid-elementary-school age that they can adjust to equal time in two homes.
- From preadolescence through adolescence, children do best if they can participate in the development of the parenting plan. Parenting plans need to be particularly flexible for older children in order to accommodate their school, social and sports activities.

Financial Issues in Divorce

One aspect of family life affected by divorce is finances. Income that once supported one household must now support two. Virtually all children find there is less money available for extras. Many experience a significant decrease in living standards, often sinking into poverty. Lower income can negatively affect health care, education, housing, social support and safety. These are all issues that can have a profound effect on children's development and long-range achievements.

Under the laws of the Commonwealth, all parents have an obligation to provide financial support for their children. Judges, who follow state guidelines when issuing court orders, determine specific payments. There are instances when they may deviate from guidelines if there is cause. It is not uncommon for support agreements to be modified over time, particularly as children's needs or parental circumstances change.

It can be easy for parents to lose sight of the impact of financial losses on their children when they are in the midst of emotional turmoil and conflict. For example, it is not uncommon for non-custodial parents to resent having to send funds to the other parent. Often they lack confidence that the money will go towards the children's support. Parents in a primary residence, on the other hand, often feel they are not receiving enough money to care adequately for their children. They may feel the other parent is shirking the responsibility to provide support.

The goal of child support payments is to allow children to live, to the greatest extent possible, as they would have without parental separation. Custodial parents must make efforts to meet their children's basic needs, and to minimize their losses after divorce. All parents must struggle to set aside their negative feelings about each other in order to negotiate fair and realistic financial arrangements for the children. Couples often require assistance from outside sources, such as an attorney or mediator, during this process.

Parents must also struggle to protect children from their anger at the other parent over financial matters. There is little to be gained, and much harm to be done, in sharing details of disappointment or disagreement with children. In addition, parents should avoid canceling scheduled time with children because child-support payments have not been made, as this only further punishes the child, and has a negative effect on the child's relationship with both parents.

Many children adjust to financial changes after divorce, despite losses, because they have been reassured by their parents that they will be cared for and that their basic needs will be always be met. They have been given enough of an idea of family finances to understand what will and won't have to change. Explanations have been given without blame, despite whatever tensions may exist between the parents.

Children's Rights

All children have the right

- to be seen as people, not pawns or possessions
- to love both parents and be loved by both
- to be in a safe environment
- to be financially supported to the best of both parents' abilities
- not to be asked to choose one parent over the other
- to express their feelings
- to be left out of their parents' conflicts
- to relationships with siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins
- to be children, free of adult responsibilities
- to be seen as independent persons, with interests, talents, friends and their own past and future.

Children with two loving and capable parents have the right

- to have regular and frequent time with each parent
- to follow developmentally appropriate, predictable parenting plans that allow some flexibility as they get older
- to see participation by each parent in school, social and sports activities.

When a Parent Has Left a Child

Not all children have two capable and loving parents who are available for regular parenting time, predictable plans and participation. Some parents abandon their families and are either rarely or not at all available. The following tips might be useful:

- You can't force unwilling parents to be responsive and available. They have to be able and willing to parent on their own. Don't get in the way of involvement, but don't force the issue.
- Periodically you may want to let the other parent know how the children are doing. Keep the doors open for future contact if you feel it is in the best interest of your children.
- Children are very forgiving. Most of them want a relationship with each parent, despite having been abandoned by one. If the missing parent returns, don't be rejecting or go overboard with enthusiasm. If it is in your children's best interest, be accepting and then let your children's actions be your guide.

If you are the returning parent, remember that it takes time to reestablish relationships with children. Be patient.

- Use reflective listening (Chapter 4) when dealing with your children's feelings of abandonment. You can't solve the problem but you can listen when they need to express sadness, resentment and anger.
- Tell your children that it is not their fault that the other parent left. Give a simple explanation that does not place blame. For example, "Dad/Mom doesn't visit/call because he/she isn't able to be a parent right now. Some people can be parents and some people can't. It isn't your fault."

Parents Who Are Not Capable

It is unfortunate but true that not all adults are capable of parenting. When there is a history of physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse; alcohol or drug abuse; or mental illness, it may be in the child's best interest to have no contact or limited and monitored contact with that parent.

6. Children's Reactions to Divorce

The experiencing of divorce and separation changes as children get older. Children need to talk about their feelings occasionally as they grow, and they need different kinds of responses from their parents as they mature. The following chart represents children's common reactions to divorce in broad terms.⁹ Some reactions may overlap age groups.

AGE GROUP	COMMON REACTIONS
<i>Infants and toddlers</i>	Trouble sleeping Fear of leaving parent, clinging Slowdown in learning new skills Crankiness Crying
<i>Children, ages 3 to 5 years</i>	Self-blame for divorce Confusion Fear of abandonment Aggression, temper tantrums Return to security items Efforts to believe all is OK Emotional neediness
<i>Children, ages 6 to 8 years</i>	Feelings of responsibility for the divorce, guilt Sadness Crying and sobbing Feelings of abandonment and rejection Hope for parental reconciliation Loyalty conflicts Sense of helplessness

Children, ages 9 to 12

Deep anger, particularly toward the parent they blame
Physical complaints
Sense of loss
Shame
Resentment
Fear of loneliness
Divided loyalties

Teenagers

Feelings of betrayal
Anger, resentment
Embarrassment
Difficulty in concentration
Chronic fatigue
Money worries
Haste to achieve independence
Overdependence
Alignment with one parent
Worry about survival of relationships, own future marriage

Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers are sensitive to parents' emotions even though they do not understand what is going on in the family. They are affected by changes in routines. They are sensitive to chaos and disruption. Infants and toddlers are at greatest risk of encountering problems in the establishment of deep bonds with their parents. At least one strong infant-parent bond is essential for future healthy development of the child. The parenting plans that work best for the child support this bond. Infants can establish a strong bond with both parents when there is one home base and parenting is shared.

What parents can do: Keep household routines as normal as you can. Make as few changes in the baby's life as possible. Though babies can benefit from frequent contact with the nonresidential parent, they need the stability of one residence for nighntimes. Make every effort to give the infant as much time and attention as before. Infants need prompt responses. They need holding and closeness. When away from their home base, infants and toddlers need their security objects—blankets, photos, and familiar toys.

Preschoolers

Preschoolers often feel responsible for their parents' divorce. They don't understand the complexities of adults' lives, and they may think that their own misbehavior or their anger at a parent has caused the divorce. They need reassurance that this is not true. When one parent leaves, preschoolers may fear that the other parent will leave too. It is normal for preschoolers to cry, cling or become demanding when divorce occurs. They may regress to behaviors of earlier years such as bed wetting, whining, thumb sucking, baby talk, hitting or biting.

What parents can do: Be patient and remember that things will get better! Reassure children that they did not cause the separation. Spend individual time with your preschooler reading or playing games. Give lots of affection. Remind your children that you will always take care of them. Help them understand the new parenting plan using a calendar marked with "Daddy days" and "Mommy days." Encourage them to use a security object such as a blanket or stuffed animal. Have photos of each parent in their room at each house.

A special note: During the preschool years, fathers may begin to spend more time with their sons and less with their daughters. Remember that girls, too, need a reliable, loving male figure who shows them that they are valuable, worthy people.

Younger Elementary

Children in the first years of elementary school seem to take divorce very personally. It is as if they are asking, "Why did you do this to me?" They feel the loss of the family deeply and may express their sadness quite openly with lots of crying. They are more aware of the physical needs of the family and may worry about shelter, money and food. Children at this age are just beginning to branch out and make friends of their own. They need a solid base from which to venture out, and they need support for forming friendships.

What parents can do: Accept your children's sadness, and help them find comfort through writing letters, drawing pictures, snuggling with security objects, looking at photos or making phone calls. Be reassuring and project a sense of hope and security. Keep their daily life as predictable as possible. Give your children permission to love both parents. Let their teachers know how your children are feeling, and find out if there are support groups for children of divorce in the schools.

Older Elementary

Older elementary school children are particularly interested in what is fair and not fair. They tend to think in terms of right and wrong, black and white. They are trying to sort out how the world works, and they are very susceptible to placing blame when things go wrong. When divorce occurs, these children often react with deep anger at their parents or at the world in general. They also tend to find one parent at fault for the family's problems. They may feel ashamed of their family, and problems may surface at school or with friends.

What parents can do: Avoid blaming one parent for the divorce. Encourage your children to have strong relationships with both parents. Acknowledge angry feelings and help them with their sadness. Don't take their feelings personally and don't turn to them for your own emotional support. Foster their involvement with friends and group activities. Be alert to problems with schoolwork, and stay in touch with teachers and school counselors. Set aside time for fun with your children.

School note: Going back and forth from home to home during the school week is a special challenge for school-aged children. Making the transitions smooth and well organized, making sure the homework assignments are completed, and making sure all messages from school reach both parents are things parents can do that are very beneficial to elementary-school-age children.

Teenagers

Teenagers are going through rapid changes in physical, social and emotional growth. Their major developmental task is to learn the skills and establish the friendships that they need to eventually separate from their families. They shift between being independent and dependent. When divorce occurs at this point in their lives, it can disrupt their ability to mature. They may feel they have no home base, and they may reject their parents or become too clingy. Some teens express their anger and pain by doing things that are dangerous. Some have serious problems with their schoolwork, and some withdraw.

What parents can do: be open to talking, and start discussion about the new family situation. But don't expect too much. Involve the teenagers in decision making about household rules and the parenting schedule. Increased participation in setting rules and schedules can result in increased cooperation. Recognize the adolescents' needs for independence, and encourage them to go on with their own lives. Reassure them that the family will adjust. Continue to bring up feelings and be a sounding board when needed. Express your confidence in your teenagers. Be very positive about their abilities. Don't take their outbursts personally and get drawn into battles. Try to have fun with them once in a while!

7. Parenting Apart

When parents divorce, the relationship between the two adults does not end. Though the marriage is over, the parenting relationship continues. Divorcing parents develop different ways of relating to one another after they have separated. Some remain friends, some have cordial but businesslike relationships, some remain angry, some have periods of continued violence and some retreat altogether. Often relationships change a great deal over time.

It is of course ideal for the children if parents can cooperate and communicate about the children's needs without fighting. When this is not possible, it is best to try to keep the conflict out of the children's view. Exposing your children to continued fighting is one of the most damaging things you can do.

A Buffer Zone

It is unrealistic to assume that everyone can be cordial to an ex-spouse. Some people find that their feelings get out of control and their anger spills over. This is especially true at the beginning of a separation.

Creating a buffer zone is often necessary in such cases. Limiting contact between parents can be helpful for a period of time. It might even be necessary on a permanent basis for anyone whose ex-spouse is unable or unwilling to cooperate or who has had a violent relationship. Here are some suggestions for ways to create a buffer zone:

- Limit all communication to issues related to the children's health, education, support and schedules.
- Leave messages on answering machines instead of talking in person, or send e-mail or letters, or write messages in a journal that goes back and forth with the children.
- Stick to your parenting schedules; avoid changes if flexibility leads to conflict.
- Remember that you have no control or influence over the life of the other parent.

Managing Anger

The most important power you have in a relationship is the power to change yourself. Changing your behavior should eventually bring about a shift in the relationship. When you change, the other person cannot respond in the usual way. It may take a few tries to convince him/her that you won't fall into the same old trap, but when you change your tone of voice, your choice of words, or your availability, the other person will respond differently. This may be the first step toward a better divorce relationship.

Preparing yourself

Think through the accusations or complaints you are likely to hear if you do talk with your ex-spouse. Plan a new response—one that will not lead to a fight. Practice your response ahead of time. Some ideas might be:

“This isn't easy for either of us. I'm sorry that you're upset.”

“This is an upsetting issue. I can't talk about this now. Let's talk later.”

Give yourself time to think. You don't have to respond to requests right away. Put a reminder by the phone that says, “I'll get back to you about that.”

Time-out

When you feel your anger rise, say to your ex-spouse, “I need a time-out. I'll call you back in an hour [tomorrow].” Do something to relax like taking a walk, soaking in the tub, or reading a book. After you have cooled off, try to think of ways to express yourself that will not inflame the situation. Then call back and resume the conversation. If this does not work, you may need a third party to help solve the problem.

Use “I Messages”

When a problem persists and you need to communicate a concern, “I Messages” are often helpful. “I Messages” are noninflammatory. They are less likely to stir up a fight because they are not blaming. These messages avoid the word “you.” They state what *you* are thinking or feeling and what happened to cause that feeling.

“I feel let down because it's difficult getting the children settled before bedtime when they're brought back late on Sundays.”

“I feel frustrated when the children come over and don't have the things they need like pajamas and underwear.”

The Comfort Zone

After a period of time, many couples find a level of comfort in their divorce relationship. Children do well when parents can relate cooperatively within a zone of comfort that may include:

- personal contact, especially when children go from one home to the other
- easy discussion of children's education, health, activities and schedules (financial issues may be more difficult and may require structured meetings)
- joint participation in children's activities or family events from time to time
- a civil, friendly or businesslike relationship where past conflicts are kept out of the present parenting relationship.

The comfort zone is not possible for everyone and is not recommended in cases where domestic violence may recur.

Planned Partnerships

Some divorcing parents find it useful to agree on how they will share responsibilities, relate to one another and get together on certain occasions for the benefit of the children. This agreement is informal yet usually recorded in writing. For example, parents might decide on the following:

- how to communicate regarding children's schedules, health, education and social or sports events (by phone, writing, answering machines, e-mail, traveling journal, etc.)
- how to make sure that changes in schedules are written down and that both parents receive copies
- how to manage attendance at children's teacher conferences and annual physical exams
- how to manage sick-child coverage and visits to doctors
- how to manage attendance at children's sports events and performances, birthday parties and family weddings and funerals, and how you will behave with one another at those functions

- how to handle financial problems if they arise
- how and when to include new partners or spouses in these matters.

These are some of the items that might be included in a planned partnership. Thinking through issues like these ahead of time can prevent uncertainty and conflicts in the future and help build a better divorce that will ultimately benefit the children.

When and if you plan to remarry, let your future partner know how you and your ex-spouse relate to one another, what your financial and time responsibilities are to your first family and what your planned partnership includes. It is best for your children if your new partner respects and supports your agreements.

Tips for Success: General Guidelines

The following guidelines will promote success when parenting apart. Note that some recommendations *do not* apply in cases where there has been family violence or abuse:

- Minimize changes in your children's lives.
- Arrange frequent and regular contact with both parents.
- Be on time.
- Make equitable financial agreements
- Make timely support payments.
- Don't discuss child-support with your children.
- Keep your children in contact with friends and relatives of both parents.
- Keep your children out of parents' casual dating relationships. Wait until a serious relationship occurs before including the children.
- Stress the good points about the other parent. Avoid name calling and complaining about or blaming the other parent.
- Keep family photos available, including photos of the other parent. Keep photos updated.

- Allow your children to express love for the other parent and to talk about their experiences with the other parent.
- Remain nonjudgmental. If children complain about the other parent, encourage them to talk to the other parent about the problem.
- Encourage the other parent's involvement in school and other activities. Make sure both parents receive communications from teachers, coaches, etc.
- Assist children in buying cards and gifts for the other parent.
- Telephone, write, e-mail, make tapes and send cards if you are unable to see your children frequently. Reach out, but also allow children some control over when and how to converse.
- Convey respect by your words and tone of voice.

Keeping children out of the middle

- Communicate directly with the other parent about matters related to the children. Children should not be used as messengers or asked to deliver support payments.
- Respect each other's privacy. Curb your curiosity about the other parent's life. Children should not be used as spies.
- Focus on and respond to the child's feelings when talking about an event or person connected to the other parent.
- Control your temper. Don't argue with the other parent in front of children. Postpone the conversation until you can manage your feelings.
- Allow your children to stay neutral. Don't ask them to take sides.
- Recognize that different households may have different rules. Don't criticize the other parent's rules and don't ask the children to try and change the other parent's rules.
- Allow children to be children. Don't lean on them for emotional support.

Problem solving

Problem solving is a form of letting go and getting on with your life. Continued fighting keeps you in a relationship with your ex-spouse. It takes strength to let go and move on.

- Use common courtesy. Be businesslike in your dealings with the other parent.
- Get all the information before jumping to conclusions.
- To avoid confusion, put in writing agreements about vacation dates, medical appointments and changes in the parenting plan.
- Negotiate with the other parent about changes in schedules or parenting responsibilities. Negotiating takes give-and-take by both parents.
- Recognize that, as children grow and develop, parenting plans and parents' responsibilities may have to change to meet the changing needs of the children.
- Keep past conflicts out of present decisions.

Children generally suffer when parents go to court: court actions often intensify angry feelings and conflicts. It is best to settle disputes out of court, if possible.

Planning to meet

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this a child-related problem? Divorced parents do best to limit discussions to issues of the children's health, education or schedules.
- Is a change in the parenting plan convenient for you only? Or does it accommodate the other parent or the children?
- Are you trying to control the parenting style of the other parent? Or do you have genuine concerns about the physical or emotional well-being of the children?
- Are you acting out of old anger? Make a list of the issues to be discussed and let them sit for a few days. Do you want to make changes? Do you need any more information?

Meeting for problem solving

- Arrange to meet at a time and location that will help make the meeting successful for you both.
- Put a time limit on the meeting ahead of time. Meetings not longer than 30 to 45 minutes usually allow parents to keep emotions under control.
- Have a short list of issues, and start with the easy ones.
- Make your requests specific.
- Don't attack or call names.
- When there are disagreements, plan to compromise.
- Write down the agreements that you make, and have a copy for each parent.
- If a problem cannot be solved, consider mediation.

No-Win Games

When parents and children are angry, disillusioned or hurt by other family members, they may consciously or unconsciously engage in “games” that cause more pain. Though one may feel powerful in the moment, the result of the games is the destruction of the parent-child relationship. These are “no-win” games.

Games parents play

“I spy”: Parents sometimes ask children for information about the other parent's private life. The motive may be to make yourself feel better, to keep the connection going, or to control the other parent. Putting children in the position of spying is damaging to their emotional well-being.

Name-calling: When you criticize or insult the other parent in the presence of the children, the children feel put down themselves. Most children see aspects of both parents within themselves and are hurt if a parent is insulted. Let the children discover for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of each parent.

Tug-of-war: Trying to get the children to side with you against the other parent may feel reassuring to you. But it puts the children in the middle of the fight and tears them apart. Don't ask them to take sides.

Messenger: Even though it may be difficult to communicate with your ex-spouse, don't ask the children to be messengers. Even informational messages should be communicated between the parents themselves to protect children from the other parent's reaction. Leave the children out of the middle.

"What would I do without you?": Loneliness and emotional pain are heavy burdens for parents to bear. But children should not be burdened with their parents' emotional or social needs. This warps the parent-child relationship and interferes with the child's development.

"I'm starting over": A divorce can thrust parents into a new social world. When parents begin to date, they may want to adopt a younger life style and more youthful clothing. This can be confusing to the children, especially adolescents. Children need their parents to be reliable, adult role models.

"My poor children": Parents may feel guilty about having hurt their children and may not want to place more stress on them. Or they may feel insecure about their relationship with their children and wish to win them over. For these and other reasons, parents may not want to "rock the boat" by setting limits on their children. But children need guidance and discipline as well as love. When parents try to buy things for their children or give in to all their requests, the children may fear that their parents don't care enough or aren't strong enough to take care of them.

Bargaining chips: Sometimes parents are so hurt and angry that they want to interfere with the children's access to the other parent as a way to strike back at or control the other parent. Children are not property and should not be used as bargaining chips. They need free access to both parents and should not be used as leverage to solve problems.

Games children play

"The other house is better": Children may tell you how wonderful the other house is, or how much fun they had with the other parent as a way of getting something from you or communicating frustration with something happening at your house. Parents need to remember not to take this personally. Each home and each parent has strengths and weaknesses. The quality of the relationship you have with your children is based on the love, guidance and respect you express, not on material things. Respond to the children's feelings, and try not to compete with the other parent.

“The other house is awful”: Sometimes children tell you all about the problems they have with the other parent as a way of making you look good. Then they try to get a special favor from you. Remember that children are not always accurate reporters and may want to manipulate situations to their advantage.

“But Mom/Dad said I could!” While spending time with Dad, for example, a child might mention a forthcoming activity that would be supported by him, knowing full well that Mom will object. Later, when the child asks for permission, unsuspecting Mom is told: “But Dad said it was a great idea!” When an issue arises, children need to be reminded that they live by the rules of the household in which they are staying.

Blackmail: This game can be very upsetting to parents. A child tries to influence the parent’s actions by threatening to move out or not visit anymore if the parent has a new partner, or is going to remarry, or disciplines the child. It is important to respond to the child’s feelings of sadness, disappointment or fear and not react with anger or alarm.

“I’ll get even with you”: This game is usually unconscious on the children’s part. They are unaware of how they are feeling and they are trying to strike back at their parents by engaging in destructive activities. These children need understanding from, and good communication with, their parents. They need help with their feelings of anger and sadness. They may need professional help.

High-Conflict Families

For many couples, sitting and talking things through is simply not an option. Interactions tend to lead to verbal or physical violence. One parent may be unable to relinquish power over the other and will stop at nothing to preserve this inequality, including intimidation and limiting the other parent’s contact with the children. The more frequent, intense, overt or insoluble the conflicts, the more serious the problem.

Hearing or seeing their parents in conflict profoundly hurts children. Children from high-conflict families are at risk of behavior and emotional problems at home and at school. If conflict cannot be eliminated, consider everything within your power to reduce their exposure to it. In high-conflict families, instead of working toward a cooperative co-parenting relationship, it can be best to work toward “parallel parenting,” where each parent interacts with the child or children but not with the other parent. Highly structured arrangements are generally the most successful for parents in conflict. Here are some suggestions for limiting the need to interact to minimize the risk of exposing children to conflict:

- Make decisions, however small, in advance (if necessary, with outside assistance).
- Avoid having the children make transitions directly from one parent to the other. Transitions should be from home to school and from school to the other parent, or some similar arrangement.
- Where this is impossible, transitions should occur only in public places. The goal is not flexibility, the goal is to abide by agreements made in the children's best interest.
- When contact is unavoidable, proceed with caution. Learn to recognize warning signs, high-risk topics, and high-risk times of day both for you and for the other parent.
- Avoid escalation with time-outs or a prearranged code to terminate an interaction.

When children have been exposed to domestic violence, strive to:

- Protect children from more exposure.
- Help children recover from past exposure.
- Address recovery issues for victims, witnesses and perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Make sure children are emotionally and physically safe with both parents.
- Plan time sharing accordingly.

Children who have witnessed one parent hurt the other, whether emotionally, verbally or physically, are at risk of a variety of physical, behavioral and psychological problems. Many suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can affect them negatively throughout their lives. If your children have been exposed to violence, don't hesitate to get help for them. If you are living in fear, there are many resources and hotlines available to you. And if you have a problem handling your own emotions and actions, there are a number organizations ready to offer assistance to help break these unhealthy patterns as well (see the Self-Help Guide below for all community resources).

8. Future Families

One of the toughest times after divorce can be when your ex-spouse brings home a new partner. It can be very difficult to adjust to the fact that your ex-spouse has found a new partner and that the children have a new parent figure. For the children's sake, it is a good idea to do all you can to be accepting of the situation and to welcome the new person.

A high percentage of divorced parents do remarry. Unfortunately, the divorce rate for second marriages is slightly higher than that for first. Second marriages are more likely to succeed when the adults have given themselves adequate time to heal and have gained insight into their own problems, whether on their own or with outside assistance.

Integrating children into new families is extremely difficult and is one of the reasons second marriages fail. When a second marriage occurs, children need opportunities to discuss their feelings. Frequent family meetings, where everyone can put problems on the table, are very helpful. Children also need regular time alone with their biological parent.

When introducing a new adult into the family, find a special name or title for that person. Step-parents should not be called Mommy or Daddy. Children should call them by their first names or by a special name. This reduces confusion and helps children maintain their loyalty to all the adults involved in parenting.

In planning for a new family, parents need to maintain their financial commitment to their first family before making other financial commitments.

Remember, be hopeful and confident with your children. With support, love, understanding and time to adjust, children and parents can get used to their new families.

9. Conclusion

When mothers and fathers establish a cooperative, businesslike relationship, family members can adjust to parents living separately. Children of divorce can grow up to be productive, happy adults if they are free from family conflicts. It is our hope that our divorce education program and this handbook will serve as guides to raising secure and healthy children.

The Big Do's

- Let children know you still love them.
- Let children know the divorce is not their fault.
- Offer explanation for the divorce without blame.
- Provide financially for your children to the best of your ability.
- Allow children their feelings.
- Allow children to maintain their close relationships with family members and friends.

The Great Big Don'ts

- Don't argue in front of the children.
- Don't bad-mouth the other parent.
- Don't use the children as messengers.
- Don't use the children as spies.
- Don't discuss support-payment problems with the children.
- Don't ask the children to take sides.
- Don't ask children to be adults

Make a pact with your children.

Encourage them to love both parents.

Reach out to them and listen to their feelings.

10. Endnotes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, 2000.
2. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, May 25, 2001.
3. “*Advance Data from Vital and Health Statistics*,” National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2002.
4. National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, April, 2001.
5. The Probate and Family Division of the Trial Courts of Massachusetts, 3 Center Plaza, Boston, MA.
6. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, June, 2001.
7. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, 2002.
8. “*Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the U.S.*” U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Washington, 2002.
9. *Start Making It Livable for Everyone*, educational program of Oakland County Friend of the Court, Oakland County, MI.

11. Self-Help Guide

Hampshire County Services

For information about community resources, call:

First Call (Northampton) 413/582-4237

First Call (Springfield) 413/737-2712
800/339-7779

Franklin Information and Referral
(Greenfield) 413/773-3421

Safe Passage 413/586-1125
toll free: 888/345-5282
Northampton hotline: 413/586-5066

Safeplan Massachusetts
Northampton 413/586-3613

Victim Witness Assistance
Northampton 413/586-5780

Transitional Living Program
Northampton 413/586-6807

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

ACES (Assoc. for Children for
Enforcement of Support)
Toledo, OH 419/472-6609

Massachusetts Department
of Social Services (DSS)
Greenfield 413/775-5000

MSPCC
Holyoke 413/532-9446

Parental Stress Hotline
Boston 800/632-8188

Parents Anonymous
Boston 800/882-1250

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ARCH/Abuse and Rape Crisis Hotline
Springfield 413/733-7100

Charlotte's Place
Ware 413/967-3435

Every Woman's Center
Amherst 413/545-0800

EMERGENCY HOTLINES

Child Abuse 800/792-5200

Emergency Services
Northampton 413/586-5555

Parental Stress Hotline 800/632-8188

FAMILY AND PARENTING SUPPORT SERVICES

Amherst Family Center
Amherst 413/549-4969

Men's Resource Center
Amherst 413/253-9887

Parental Stress Hotline
Boston 800/632-8188

GAY AND LESBIAN SERVICES

GLBT Counseling & Psychotherapy
Referral Services
Northampton 413/586-2627

Men's Resource Center
Gay & Lesbian Program 413/253-9887

Straight Spouse Support
Network 413/625-6033

Valley Gay Alliance 413/746-8804

Valuable Families
P.O. Box 60634,
Northampton, MA 01060

LEGAL SERVICES

Hampshire County Bar Assoc.
Lawyer Referral Service
Northampton 413/586-8729

Legal Advocacy Referral Directory
Boston 617/742-9179

Mass. Justice Project
Holyoke 800/639-1209

Victim Witness Assistance
Northampton 413/586-5780

MEN'S RESOURCES

Men's Resource Center
Amherst 413/253-9887

MOVE (Men Overcoming Violence)
Amherst 413/253-9588

MENTAL HEALTH

Child and Family Clinic (Service Net)
Northampton 413/585-1348

Children's Clinic (Northampton
Center for Children & Families)
Northampton 413/587-3265

Children's Aid and Family Services
Northampton 413/584-5690

Community Support Services
of Hampshire County
Northampton 413/582-0471

Emergency Services 413/586-5555
Northampton & 800/322-0424

Everywoman's Center Counseling Services
Amherst 413/545-0883

Psychological Services Center (UMass)
Amherst 413/545-0041

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Al-Anon 413/253-5261

Alcoholics Anonymous
Western Mass. Intergroup
24-Hour Hotline 413/532-2111
& 413/538-5822

Alcoholism and Drug Services
of Western Mass. 413/737-1141

Community Substance Abuse Center
Northampton 413/584-2404

Dickinson Programs
Northampton 413/586-8550

WOMEN'S SERVICES

Everywoman's Center—
Women of Color Program
Amherst 413/545-0883

Everywoman's Resource
and Referral Center
Amherst 413/545-0883

Family Planning
Northampton 413/586-2539

Franklin County Resources

For information about community resources, call:

First Call for Help 413/582-4237

Franklin Information and Referral
Greenfield 413/773-3421

BATTERER'S COUNSELING

Beacon Clinic Outpatient Program
Greenfield 413/772-6388

Human Resource Center
Athol 978/249-9926

Men Overcoming Violence
Amherst 413/253-9588

CHILD CARE

Child Care Focus 800/962-5511

Franklin Child Care Services
Greenfield 413/773-3421

COURTS

Franklin Probate and Family Court
Greenfield 413/774-7011

Franklin Superior Court
Greenfield 413/774-5535

Greenfield District Court
Greenfield 413/774-5533

Juvenile Court
Greenfield 413/775-0014

Juvenile Court
Northampton 413/584-7686

Juvenile Court
Orange 413/775-0014

Orange District Court
Orange 978/544-8277

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Everywoman's Center
Amherst 413/545-0883
24 Hour Rape Crisis Line 413/545-0800

New England Learning Center
for Women in Transition (NELCWIT)
Greenfield 413/772-0871

NELCWIT
Athol 978/249-2938

NELCWIT
Orange 978/544-0270

NELCWIT Hotline
Greenfield 413/772-0806

Victim Witness
Greenfield 413/772-6944

Victim Witness
Orange 978/544-7376

EMERGENCY HOTLINES

Assault Hotline
Greenfield 413/772-0806

Child Abuse 800/792-5200

Clinical Support Options;
Crisis Services 413/774-5411

Crisis Intervention 800/562-0112

Drugs/Alcohol 800/252-6465

FC Mental Health Emergency Services
Greenfield 413/774-5411

FC Mental Health Emergency Services
Orange 413/774-1000

Parent Stress Line 800/632-8188
 Parents Helping Parents 800/882-1250
 Suicide Hotline 800/562-0012

Valley Gay Alliance 413/746-8804
 Valuable Families
 P.O. Box 60634, Northampton

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Consumer Credit Counseling Service
 of Massachusetts, Inc. 800/282-6196

LEGAL SERVICES

Bar Advocates for Women
 Greenfield 413/773-9839

Disability Law Center
 Northampton 800/222-5619

FOOD, CLOTHING, BASIC NEEDS

Lighthouse on the Rock Church
 Athol 978/249-4024

Franklin County Lawyer Referral Service
 Greenfield 413/773-9839

Food Stamps 800/645-8333

Mediation and Training Collaborative
 Greenfield 413/774-7469

Salvation Army
 Greenfield 413/773-3649

Brick House Community Center
 Turners Falls 413/863-9576

Salvation Army
 Athol 978/249-8111

Quabbin Mediation
 Orange 413/774-1000

Survival Center
 Turners Falls 413/863-9549

Franklin Clinical Associates
 Greenfield 413/773-2209

WIC (food vouchers)
 Greenfield 413/774-2318

Franklin Community Action Corp.
 Greenfield 413/774-7028

WIC (food vouchers)
 Orange 978/544-8124

Clinical Support Options
 Greenfield 413/774-7931

WIC (food vouchers)
 Athol 978/249-2373

Human Resource Center
 Athol 978/249-9926

GAY AND LESBIAN SERVICES

Pastoral Counseling Center
 Greenfield 413/773-3484

GLBT Counseling &
 Psychotherapy Referral Services
 Northampton 413/586-2627

MULTICULTURAL SERVICES

Men's Resource Center
 Gay & Lesbian Program 413/253-9887
 Straight Spouse Support
 Network 413/625-6033

Center for New Americans
 Greenfield 413/772-1592

Int'l Language Institute of Mass., Inc.
 Northampton 413/586-7569

PARENTING

Alternatives
Greenfield 413/774-6010

Brick House
Turners Falls 413/863-9576

The Center
Greenfield 413/774-1000

Child & Family Services
Greenfield 413/774-6252

DIAL/SELF
Greenfield 413/774-7054

Men's Resource Center
Amherst 413/253-9887

Franklin Info and Referral
Greenfield 413/774-2318

Clinical and Support Options
Orange 978/249-9926

Mass. Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Children
Greenfield 413/773-3608

First Call for Help
Athol 978/249-4295

Parents Helping Parents
Boston 800/882-1250

Parents Stress
Hotline 800/632-8188

SHELTERS

Athol/Orange Family Inn
Orange 978/544-8245

Greenfield Family Inn
Greenfield 413/774-6382

NELCWIT (emergency shelter for women)
Greenfield 413/772-0806

Silver Street Inn
Greenfield 413/774-7234

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Al-Anon 413/253-5261

Alateen 413/253-5261

Alcoholics Anonymous
Greenfield 800/443-9484

W. Mass Area A.A.
24-Hour Phone 413/532-2111

Beacon Programs
Greenfield 413/773-2377

Hotline
Boston 800/327-5050

Narcotics Anonymous 413/538-7479

WOMEN'S SERVICES

Everywoman's Center—
Women of Color Program
Amherst 413/545-0883

Everywoman's Resource
and Referral Center
Amherst 413/545-0883

Family Planning
Northampton 413/586-2539

Tapestry Health Services
Greenfield 413/773-5403
Orange 413/773-5403

NELCWIT
Greenfield 413/772-0871

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Phelan, T., *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*. Parentmagic, Inc. 2010. A simple approach to firm yet loving management of children.

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Talan, K., *Help Your Child or Teen Get Back on Track: What Parents and Professionals Can Do for Childhood Emotional and Behavioral Problems*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 2009. A child psychiatrist answers a range of parental concerns in the context of the drive towards healthy development.

Turecki, S., with L. Tonner, *The Difficult Child: Expanded and Revised Edition*. New York: Bantam, 2005. Children with difficult temperaments need different parenting approaches.

Webster-Stratton, C., *The Incredible Years: A Trouble-Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3-8*. Boulder, CO, 2006. Solid advice to parents of younger children.

Wolf, A.E., *I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut up: What to Say and Not Say When Parenting Teens*. New York: Harpercollins, 2011.

Divorce, co-parenting and single parenting

Ackerman, M., *Does Wednesday Mean Mom's House or Dad's House? Parenting Together While Living Apart*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008. Keeping your eye on the child's needs in developing and making successful family time-sharing plans.

Ahrons, C., *The Good Divorce*. New York: Harpercollins, 1994. Sound suggestions for coping well with divorce, based on a research study of 200 parents.

Anderson, S., *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing*. New York: Berkeley, 2000. Promotes understanding of and advice for coping with the emotional experience of being left by another.

Bryan, M., *The Prodigal Father: Reuniting Fathers and Their Children*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1997. Helping fathers and mothers resolve resentment and pain when families have been abandoned.

Clapp, G., *Divorce and New Beginnings: An Authoritative Guide to Recovery and Growth, Solo Parenting and Step Families*. New York: Wiley, 1992. Focus on building a new and successful life for yourself and your family after divorce.

Doss, B., *But... What About Me? (How It Feels To Be a Kid in Divorce) 2nd Edition*. Bookmark, 2000. Through a child's voice we learn about the emotional experience of living through parental divorce. May also be appropriate for some children.

Everett, C. and S.V. Everett, *Healthy Divorce: For Parents and Children--An Original, Clinically Proven Program for Working Through the Fourteen Stages of Separation, Divorce, and Remarriage*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998. A solid book with extensive advice, written by two well-respected leaders in the field of divorce counseling and mediation.

Fisher, B., and R. Alberti, *Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends, 3rd Edition*. Atascadero: Impact Publishers, 2005. Dealing with emotions and recovery following a divorce. Workbook and audio book also available.

Foust, L., *The Single Parent's Almanac: Real World Answers to Your Everyday Questions*. Rocklin: Prima Publishers, 1996. A comprehensive resource book.

Hetherington, M. with J. Kelly, *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. New York: Norton, 2003. A prominent researcher explains how people can build success out of the stress and adversity of divorce.

Kalter, N., *Growing Up with Divorce*. New York: Free Press, w005. The divorce experience fore children at different ages and how to help them cope.

Klatt, W., *Live-away Dads: Staying a Part of your Children's Lives When They Aren't a Part of Your Home*. New York: Penguin, 1999. A practical and encouraging guide for fathers who want to make the best of their relationships with their children after a divorce or breakup.

Knox, D., and K. Leggett, *The Divorced Dad's Survival Book: How to Stay Connected with Your Kids*. De Capo, 2000. How the father-child relationship can survive and even strengthen after divorce.

Lyster, M., *Child Custody: Building Parenting Agreements That Work*. Berkeley: Nolo Press, 2003. A step-by-step guide to help even hostile couples work out agreements after separation.

Nelson, J., C. Erwin and C. Delzer, *Positive Discipline for Single Parents*, Rocklin: Prima Publishing, 1999. One of a clear and practical series on discipline.

Neuman, M.G., and P. Romanawski, *Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way*. New York: Times Books, 1998. Practical and positive guidance for parents of children of all ages.

Newman, G., *101 Ways to be a Long-Distance Super Dad...or Mom, Too!* New York: Robert Reed, 2006. Keeping the connection with children when living apart from them.

Oberlin, L.H., *Surviving separation and divorce*. Adams Media, 2005. Written for women facing an unwished for separation/divorce.

Oberlin, L.H., *Surviving separation and divorce*. Adams Media, 2005. Written for women facing an unwished for separation/divorce.

Ricci, I., *Mom's House, Dad's House: Making Two Homes for Your Child*. New York: MacMillan, 1997. A well respected guide.

Robboy, A.W., *Aftermarriage: The Myth of Divorce, Unspoken Marriage Agreements And Their Impact on Divorce*. Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2002. An attorney's guide to understanding the psychological and emotional dynamics of marriage and divorce.

Rothschild, G., *Dear Mom and Dad: What Kids of Divorce Really Want to Say to Their Parents*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999. A popular and helpful book with a focus on children and their emotional needs during and after divorce.

Scheider, M. and J. Zuckerberg, *Difficult Questions Kids Ask and Are Afraid to Ask About Divorce*. Touchstone, 1996. A good guide to children's thoughts and feelings at different ages.

Shulman, D., *Co-Parenting After Divorce: How to Raise Happy, Healthy Children in Two-Home Families*. Winnspeed Press, 1996. Short: clear and practical information.

Teyber, E., *Helping Children Cope With Divorce*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. Named one of ten best parenting books by Child Magazine.

Thomas, S., *Parents Are Forever*. Scottsdale: Springboard Press, 2004. A guide to successful co-parenting.

Wallerstein, J., and S. Blackslee, *Second Chances*. Boston: Mariner Press, 2004. Ten-year follow-up on impact of divorce on children and families (see below).

Wallerstein, J., and J. Kelley, *Surviving the Break-Up: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce*. New York: Basic Books, 1996. A landmark study of the effects of divorce on families.

Webb, S. and R. Ousky, *The Collaborative Way to Divorce*. Plume, 2007. Focus on conducting divorce in cooperative and collaborative manner to reduce stress on children.

Wolf, A.E., *Why Did You Have to Get A Divorce? And Why Can't I get a Hamster?: A guide to Parenting Through Divorce*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1998. Positive and practical guide for parents.

Conflict Resolution in Divorce

Baris, M., and C. Garrity, *Caught in the Middle: Protecting Children of High-Conflict Divorce*. Lexington, MA: Jossey Bass, 1997. Explores the causes and consequences of high-level conflict between divorced parents, as well as its impact on children's development. Offers useful advice for getting back on track.

Blau, M., *Families Apart: Ten Keys to Successful Co-Parenting*. New York: Putnam, 1995. Communication, conflict resolution and coping with the events that continue to bring parents together after a divorce.

Evans, P., *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize it and How to Respond*. Cincinnati: Adams Media, 2010. A reissued best-seller with valuable advice for managing verbal abuse.

Friedman, G., *A Guide to Divorce Mediation: How to Reach a Fair, Legal Settlement at a Fraction of the Cost*. New York: Workman Publishing Company, 1993. The author, an experienced attorney/mediator, gives insight into and advice for the mediation process.

Garber, B.D., *Keeping Kids out of the Middle: Child-Centered Parenting in the Midst of Conflict, Separation, and Divorce*. Deerfield Beach, FL: HCI, 2008. Highly practical advice on keeping the focus on children while undergoing parental conflict.

Kline, I. and S. Pew, *For the Sake of the Children: How to Share Your Children with Your Ex-Spouse in Spite of Your Anger*. Rocklin, CA: Prima, 2000. A divorced parent gives advice on protecting children from adult anger and resentments.

MacKay, M., *Calming the Family Storm: Anger Management for Moms, Dads, and All the Kids*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers, 2004. Explores the effect of parental anger on developing children, along with practical advice for changing family patterns.

Stahl, P.M., *Parenting after Divorce: Resolving Conflicts and Meeting Your Child's Needs*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers, 2007. An experienced psychologist offers down to earth and practical advice for co-parenting after divorce.

Talia, M.S., *How to Avoid the Divorce from Hell—and Dance Together at Your Daughter's Wedding*. San Ramon, CA: Nexus, 2004. Practical advice for managing the not so easy divorce process while maintaining good parenting practices.

Warshak, R.A., *Divorce Poison New and Updated Edition: How to Protect Your Family from Bad-mouthing and Brainwashing*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2010. Maintaining positive relationships with children in the face of their exposure to parental anger and bad-mouthing.

Remarriage and Step-Parenting

Einstein, E. and L. Albert, *Strengthening Your Stepfamily*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishing, 2005. Written by and for step-parents. Great cartoons

Gottman, J., *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail...In Addition, How You Can Make Yours Last*. Fireside, 1995. Well-liked by many couples.

Hendrix, H., *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*. New York: Holt, 2007. A best-selling book that explains how we unconsciously choose our mates and how to make our relationships conscious and successful.

Lofas, J., *Family Rules: Helping Stepfamilies and Single Parents Build Happy Homes*. New York: Kensington, 1998. Practical advice for establishing house rules and expectations after divorce or separation.

Newman, M., *Stepfamily Realities: How to Overcome Difficulties and Have a Happy Family*. New Harbinger Publications, 1994. Practical advice for identifying and solving common step- and blended family issues.

Penton, John and S. Welsh, *Yours, Mine and Hours: Relationship Skills for Blended Families*, 2007. Guiding your family through emotional adjustments to new siblings, parents, and family dynamics.

Thomas, S., *Two Happy Homes: A Working Guide for Parents & Stepparents After Divorce and Remarriage*, 2005. Advice on introducing a new partner to your children and building strong family relationships.

Wisdom, S. and J. Green, *Stepcoupling: Creating and Sustaining a Strong Marriage in Today's Blended Family*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002. Authors discuss the challenges of “step-coupling” as remarried parents engage in the process of establishing and maintaining a new family.

Young Children (3-7)

Abercrombie, B. and M. Graham, *Charlie Anderson*, New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1995. A cat lives with one family during the day and another at night. The children who own him realize that both they and the cat have “two houses, two beds, two families who love” them.

Abney, J., *Anaiya Lives with Daddy; Anaiya Visits Mommy*, OK: Tate Publishing, 2009. An African-American child moves from her mother's to her father's home, learning that parents do not have to be married in order to love and care for their child.

Asurel, C. and Denton, K., *Two Homes*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003. This gently reassuring text focuses on what is gained rather than lost when parents divorce. Sensitive illustrations depict two unique homes in all their small details, firmly stabilizing the child's place in both of them.

Bunting, E. and Papp, L., *My Mom's Wedding*. Ann Arbor: Sleeping Bear Press, 2011. Seven-year-old Pinky reflects upon her relationships with her faraway father and soon-to-be stepfather. Pinky secretly hopes her parents will get back together, but eventually realizes that she is happy for her mother and stepfather.

Coffelt, N., *Fred Stays with Me!* New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2007. Highlights the importance of bringing loved objects back and forth between two homes, and emphasizes the things that remain the same: school, friends and the constancy of a beloved dog.

Hickman, A., *Robert Lives with his Grandparents*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman and Co, 1995. An African-American school-age boy's father has disappeared. His mother uses drugs and he lives with his grandparents. He learns he is not the only child unable to live with his biological parents, and finds comfort in that fact.

Lansky, V., *It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear*, Minneapolis: Book Peddlers, 1997. Deals directly with children's painful feelings and portrays sensitive, hopeful parental responses. Provides special information for parents.

Levine, S and Langdo, B. *Do You Sing Twinkle?: A Story About Remarriage and New Family*. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press, 2009. A boy misses his mother and resents his new step-sisters. With sensitivity, his parents help him understand his feelings and adjust to the changes in his life.

Levins, S., *Was It The Chocolate Pudding?* Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2006. Told from the perspective of a young boy living with his single father and brother, divorce is explained with an emphasis on the fact that it is not the child's fault.

Lindsay, J., *Do I Have a Daddy? A Story About a Single-Parent Child*, Buena Vista, CA: Morning Glory Press, 1999. A child of never-married parents asks about his father. Good advice for parents, too. Also available in Spanish.

Moore-Malinos, J., *When My Parents Forgot How to be Friends*, New York: Barron's, 2005. This book shows a "best case" scenario of parents learning to protect their children from conflict.

Newman, L. and Hegel, A., *Saturday is Pattyday*. Chicago: New Victoria Publishers, 1993. A child feels the pain of his mothers' divorce. A "best case" scenario in which the two moms convey that "only grown-ups get divorced. Not kids." 3-8

Penn, A., *The Kissing Hand*, Washington, DC: Child and Family Press, 1993. Chester Raccoon misses his mother when it's time to go to school. A comforting book for any child missing one parent while spending time with the other.

Reilly, N and Pease, B., *My Stick Family*, NJ: New Horizon Press, 2002. Billy learns that just because his parents are divorced and live in separate homes, it doesn't mean he's lost the strength and love of his family.

Picard, M., *Divorce and the Unbroken Circle of Love*, UT: Cedar Fort, 2006. Children come to understand that divorce does not mean the end of love and family.

Ransom, J., *I Don't Want to Talk About It*, Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2000. A young girl imagines herself to be an animal that can express a range of emotions.

Rubin, J., *My Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Anymore*, Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2002. A journal and drawing book for children whose parents have separated or divorced.

Schmitz, T., *Standing On My Own Two Feet: A Child's Affirmation of Love in the Midst of Divorce*, New York: Price, Stern, Sloan, 2008. A boy makes a good adjustment to his parents' two homes.

Spelman, C., *Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce*, Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Co, 1998. A strong little girl learns to accept a mix of feelings as her parents divorce.

Thomas, P., *My Family's Changing*, New York: Barrons, 1999. Guide to the range of emotions a young child might have, with helpful guide for parents. Does not discuss remarriage or step-families.

Wyeth, S.D., *Always my Dad*. Scholastic, 1998. An African American girl misses her father. 5-7

Elementary School Children (8-12)

Alvarez, J., *How Tia Lola Came to (Visit) Stay*. New York: Random House, 2002. A grandmother from the Dominican Republic comes to stay with a nine-year-old boy and his younger sister after their parents divorce and the family has moved. 8+

Boy, C. *Chevrolet Saturdays*. New York: Puffin Books, 1995. An African-American boy deals with a new stepfather who is reaching out to him. 8+

Brown, M. and L. Krasny, *Dinosaurs Divorce*. New York: Little Brown and Co, 1986. Cartoon format: how children may feel about many aspects of divorce, dating and remarriage. 6+

Byars, B., *The Pinballs*. Scholastic, 1986. A wise and charming story of three children in foster care. 10+

Christopher, M., *The Comeback Challenge*. Boston: Little Brown, 1996. A young soccer player struggles with his anger about his parents' divorce while living with grandparents. 10-13

Cleary, B., *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. New York: Harper Trophy, 2000. A Newbery Medal winner. In his correspondence with an author, a young boy reveals changes in his family and his father's absence.

Codell, E.R., *Sahara Special*, New York: Hyperion, 2003. A clever fifth-grade girl misses her father and is labeled "special ed" at school. 9-11

Danziger, P., *You Can't Eat Your Chicken Pox, Amber Brown*. New York: Scholastic, 1995. *Amber Brown Goes Forth*, Scholastic, 1995. *Amber Brown Sees Red*, Putnam, 1997. In this series, a girl copes with her father's absence, her mother's new boyfriend, her mother remarrying, and father's return to town. Written with gentle humor. 7+

Davis, D., *Something is Wrong at my House*. Seattle: Parenting Press, 2010. Based on a true story, this 32-page book shows a child seeking, and finally obtaining, help in a domestic violence situation. 6+

Fine, A., *Step by Wicked Step*. Demco Media, 1997. Stranded in a haunted house at night, a group of five students reveal their stepfamily stories. 9+

Ford, M., Ford, S., Ford, A., Blackstone-Ford, J., *My Parents Are Divorced Too*. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2nd Edition, 2006. Kids talk to kids about divorce, remarriage and stepfamilies. 8-13

Heegaard, M.E., *When Mom and Dad Separate: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief from Divorce*. Woodland Press, 1996. Workbook allows children to put feelings into drawings when words are hard to find. 9+

Holyoke, N., *A Smart Girl's Guide to Her Parents' Divorce: How to Land on Your Feet When Your World Turns Upside Down*. Middletown, WI: American Girl Publishing, 2009. More answers to girls' letters on every aspect of divorce. Activities, questionnaires, and counseling on many topics. Ages 9-12

Holyoke, N., *Help! A Girl's Guide to Divorce and Stepfamilies*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company, 1999. Girls' letters written to *American Girl Magazine*, with helpful responses and appealing illustrations. Ages 9-12

Johnston, J., with C. Garrity, M. Baris and K. Breunig. *Through the Eyes of Children*. New York: Free Press, 1997. Experts in the field of divorce present animal stories with important messages that will appeal to the older child.

Krementz, J., *How It Feels When Parents Divorce*. New York: Knopf, 1988. See Adolescent section . 8+

MacGregor, C., *Jigsaw Puzzle Family: The Stepkids' Guide to Fitting It Together*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishing, 2005. Reassurance and advice for children in blended families. 10-14

McDonald, M., *Meet Julie*. Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing, 2007. Well-adjusted ten year old adjusts to a move away from friends, her family home and her father in 1970's California. 8+

Moser, A., *Don't Fall Apart on Saturdays! The Children's Divorce-Survival Book*. Kansas City: Landmark Editions, 2000. Dr. Moser explains divorce to children. Good to read with your child as well. 9+

Moss, M., *Max Disaster #1: Alien Eraser to the Rescue*. Candlewick: 2009. Max and his zany adventures while coping with his parents' divorce. 8-12

Pickhardt, C., *The Case of the Scary Divorce*. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 1997. A mysterious investigator helps a boy cope with insecurity, sadness, and anger during his parents' divorce. Middle to high school

Prokop, M., *Divorce Happens to the Nicest Kids: A Self Help Book for Kids*. Alegrah House, 1996. Common misperceptions held by many children about divorce, concisely disproved by child psychologist. 6+

Ricci, I., *Mom's House Dad's House for Kids : Feeling at Home in One Home or Two* New York: Fireside, 2006. From popular author, how kids can stay strong and succeed in life when parents separate, divorce, or get married again. 9+

Swan-Jackson, A., *When Your Parents Split Up: How to Keep Yourself Together*. Price Stern Sloan, 1999. Experts answers teens' questions about divorce. Includes advice, questionnaires and activities, plus real-life interviews with teens who have been through the same situation. 9+

Verdick, E., *How to Take the Grrrr Out of Anger*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002. Helping children understand anger and learn how to manage it. 8+

Adolescents (13+)

Blume, J., *It's Not the End of the World*. New York: Delacorte Books for Young Readers (Reprint Edition), 2006. The typical and confusing emotions experienced during divorce are highlighted. 12+

Buscemi, K. *Split In Two: Keeping it Together When Your Parents Live Apart*. San Francisco: Zest Books, 2009. With edgy, modern, graphic novel feel, a valuable resource to help teens feel less crazed and confused, and more self-confident.

Casella-Kapusinski, L. *Now What Do I Do? A Guide to Help Teenagers with Their Parents' Separation or Divorce*. ACTA Publications, 2006. How to deal with feelings of guilt and anger, improve communication with parents, reexamine family ties, avoid the parental war zone, find comfort in faith and friends, and learn to forgive. (Christian orientation)

Danziger, P., *The Divorce Express*. New York: Puffin Press, Republished 2007. Shuttling between her divorced parents, Phoebe is on the "Divorce Express," a bus on which she spends too much time but where she also makes some startling discoveries.

Kimball, G., *How to Survive Your Parents' Divorce*. Chico, CA: Gayle Kimball, 1994. Kids and professionals share ideas for coping.

Kloepfler, M., *Hope's Beat: The Story of a Teenager, Her Stepmother, and a Rock Star*. Stephens Press, 2003. Fifteen year-old girl grapples with loss and fear for the future. 13+

Krementz, J., *How It Feels When Parents Divorce*. New York: Knopf, 1988. In this moving and comforting book, nineteen boys and girls, from seven to sixteen years old

and from highly diverse backgrounds, share their deepest feelings about their parents' divorce.

MacGregor, C. *The Divorce Helpbook for Teens*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers, 2004. Warm and friendly guide, with vignettes, strategies, and solid advice.

Robinson, L. *Gateway*. New York: Laurel Leaf Books, 1998. Thirteen-year-old Mac is caught between her divorcing parents, their lawyers, and friends. With the help of two remarkable new friends, she takes charge in a surprising way.

Schab, L. *The Divorce Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Move Beyond the Break Up*. Oakland, CA: Instant Help, 2008. This workbook helps teens understand their feelings, cope with parental fighting, develop self-awareness and communication skills.

Schneider, M., *Difficult Questions Kids Ask and Are Afraid to Ask About Divorce*. New York: Touchstone, 1996. Question-and-answer format; helpful for teens and their parents.

Stern, Z. and Stern, E., *Divorce is Not The End of The World: Zoe's and Evan's Coping Guide for Kids*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press, Rev Ed, 2008. Ten years later, the authors revisit topics they first wrote about at ages 13 and 15 when their parents divorced.

Trueit, T. *Surviving Divorce: Teens Talk About What Hurts and What Helps*. CT: Children's Press, 2007. Personal stories and photos, frequent statistics and quizzes. 12+

Youngerman, B., *The Truth about Divorce*. Facts on File, 2010. A comprehensive A-Z guide to the facts and myths of divorce. Evenhanded treatment of sensitive topics.

More Books on Divorce and Domestic Violence

Bernstein, S.C. *A Family That Fights*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1991. A book for children in grades one to three about feelings, family violence, and family issues.

Brown, J., P. Provonsha Hopkins and M. Katayama. *What Angry Kids Need: Parenting Your Angry Child without Going Mad*. Seattle: Parenting Press, 2008. Guidance for parents and grandparents with angry children.

Holmes, M. *A Terrible Thing Happened - A Story for Children who have Witnessed Violence or Trauma*. New York: Dalmatian Press, 2000. After Sherman is frightened, a counselor helps him understand and deal with his feelings. 4 and up.

Kaplan, R.M. *How to Say it When You Don't Know What to Say: The Right Words For Difficult Times*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 2004. Guidance to adults for providing comfort.

Loftis, C. *The Words Hurt: Helping Children Cope with Verbal Abuse*. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, 1997. A boy gets help after being hurt by his father's anger. Ages 4 and up.

Mollica, R.F. *Healing Invisible Wounds: Paths to Hope and Recovery in a Violent World*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2008. Reveals how trauma survivors, through the telling of their stories, teach all of us how to deal with the tragic events of everyday life. For adults.

Paris, S. and G. Labinski, *Mommy and Daddy Are Fighting*. WA: Seal Press, 1986. Preschool and up.

Watts, G. *Hear My Roar: A Story of Family Violence*. Toronto: Annick Press, 2009. Explores family relationships including substance abuse and domestic violence. Ages 6 and up.

Special Needs Children and Divorce

Alvord, B. and C., *It's About Me! - Dealing with Autism in a Divorced Family*. Raleigh, N.C: lulu.com, 2011.

Price, M., *Divorce and the Special Needs Child: A Guide for Parents*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Press, 2010.

Price, M., *The Special Needs Child and Divorce: A Practical Guide to Handling and Evaluating Cases*. American Bar Association Publishing, 2009.

The greatest gift you can give your children is to allow them to have a loving, satisfying relationship with both parents and not expose them to continued conflict and hostility.

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