

3 WAYS TO LIMIT THE IMPACT OF SEPARATION OR DIVORCE ON YOUR KIDS



Even in the most amicable of divorces, there is no question that the division of the family has a significant impact on the children. So every parent should be looking for ways to lessen that impact.

1. Absolutely Never Speak Negatively About the Other Parent. Never. Ever. Even if the other parent is talking negatively about you; even if the other parent is truly an abhorrent person, do not discuss this with the child or allow the child to overhear you talking to someone else about the

other parent. It is not fair to put children in that position, even if they are older and can better understand what's going on. If a child tells you that the other parent or his/her family has said something about you, tell your child that those topics are not appropriate and you are sorry that he or she had to hear such a thing. This can be the most difficult thing to do. It is natural to want to fight back. But remember: this is about the child, not about you. If the other parent is misbehaving, allow the child to figure this out on his/her own. Sometimes that takes patience, but it almost always works. Just keep being a great parent and the children will know not to believe what may be said about you.

2. Try to Work Out a Physical Custody Schedule with Details.

Many parents think it is unnecessary to put a physical custody schedule into writing, much less have one with seemingly insignificant details. The best custody schedules include, but are not limited to, which parent has the children when; what time and at what location(s) the exchanges will take place; who is responsible for transportation; what is the holiday schedule (with all of the above-described details); how much vacation each parent can take; and how make-up time will be scheduled. When two parents are getting along and agreeing, the custody schedule does not need to be followed. But, none of us has a crystal ball. The relationship may not always be wonderful. To lessen the conflict and impact on the children, it is best to have a written agreement to fall back on.

3. Try Your Best to Co-Parent. The kids who adjust the best to their parents' separation generally have those who are able to co-parent. The relationship between the parents has been shown to impact the mental and emotional well-being of the children. So, how do you show kids that they are what is most important? Show them consistency. Try to have similar house rules, discipline, schedule, and rewards. And honor the other parent's discipline when the child switches houses. This shows the child that you are still a team, even though you are living separately. Co-parents should make all major decisions for the child together. This can include medical, educational and financial decisions, among others. Try to separate your feelings from your behavior and be a healthy example for your children.

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