



# KIDS Services

Parent Education Center

April 2009

## What Kids Need From Divorcing Parents

By Ellen Swallow, MFCC

Make no mistake about it, the facts are in. Divorce is very traumatic for children, because their family as they know it is dying, and the grieving process affects their development for years, and often a lifetime. Divorce leads to anxiety, depression, hostile behavior, lack of interest in academic achievement, withdrawal and a host of other possible symptoms. Do all children of divorcing parents get all these symptoms? Of course not. Do most children of divorcing parents get some of these symptoms? Yes.

Keep in mind that when you decided to have children you made a unilateral contract with them to provide them with a stable home in which they could learn the skills they need to succeed in life. One of those skills is how to resolve conflicts in a healthy, civilized way, finding a win-win solution that works well enough for the parties concerned. If they see parents unable to communicate respectfully or to resolve their differences in a healthy, dignified way, then that is likely to be the level of functioning that they will achieve. Keep in mind that professional help in learning the skills of conflict resolution and love-enhancing communication is much, much cheaper both financially and emotionally than divorce and its life-long after-costs ever will be.

Yes, there are legitimate reasons for leaving a spouse. Among them are chronic abuse, violence, drug use, irresponsibility, lying, illegal behavior betrayal and refusal to do whatever it takes to change these behaviors. There are indeed things that you and your children are better off without.

When this is the case, it is important to minimize the damage to your children. It means walking a fine line between communicating

truthfully with them and not being disrespectful of their other parent, whom they in most cases will need to continue to love, flaws and all. It means never, ever using the children to manipulate or avenge your spouse. Such behavior may work in the short term, but will boomerang in the long term in the form of your children's anger and disrespect towards you.

If you have determined after long and careful evaluation and counseling that you are truly unable to bring your marriage to a level of functioning that is at least somewhat healthy for you and your children, then attempt to divorce as civilly and with as much support as possible. Make custody and visitation arrangements that give your children as much access as is healthy for them to both parents. Make housing, school, financial and social decisions again from the point of view of what the children need. This does not ignore your needs as parents, because the children will need for you to function well enough to take the best care you can of them. Use third parties to help you negotiate these arrangements if need be. Very often divorce counseling can resolve issues much less expensively and with more input from the divorcing spouses than is the case when the authority to make these decisions is given over to the court.

The decision to divorce is one of the most serious ones you will undertake. Give it lots of thought, consult with the family, friends or professional advisors whom you trust and respect, and do absolutely everything you can do before taking the final step, so that whatever your decision, you will have peace of mind about it in the future.

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[Kidsservices@qwest.net](mailto:Kidsservices@qwest.net)  
[www.Kidsservices.net](http://www.Kidsservices.net)

### Parent Education Classes

- ☉ Love and Logic
- ☉ Parenting Skills for Teen Parents
- ☉ Smart Steps for Stepfamilies
- ☉ Nurturing Fathers
- ☉ Nonviolent Family Skills
- ☉ Skills for Families in Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery

**See back cover for more information and times of classes**

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# Single Parenting and Today's Family

Over the past 20 years single-parent families have become even more common than the so-called "nuclear family" consisting of a mother, father and children. Today we see all sorts of single parent families: headed by mothers, headed by fathers, headed by a grandparent raising their grandchildren.

Life in a single parent household - though common - can be quite stressful for the adult and the children. Members may unrealistically expect that the family can function like a two-parent family, and may feel that something is wrong when it can not. The single parent may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of juggling caring for the children, maintaining a job and keeping up with the bills and household chores. And typically, the family's finances and resources are drastically reduced following the parents' breakup.

Single parent families deal with many other pressures and potential problem areas that the nuclear family does not have to face. Some of these are:

- Visitation and custody problems;
- The effects of continuing conflict between the parents;
- Less opportunity for parents and children to spend time together;
- Effects of the breakup on children's school performance and peer relations;
- Disruptions of extended family relationships;
- Problems caused by the parents' dating and entering new relationships.

The single parent can help family members face these difficulties by talking with each other about their feelings and working together to tackle problems. Support from friends, other family members and the church or synagogue can help too. But if family members are still overwhelmed and having problems, it may be time to consult an expert.

[www.apahelpcenter.org](http://www.apahelpcenter.org)

## Stupid Parent Tricks

The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers recently surveyed its membership to find out what are the biggest mistakes divorcing couples with children make. Here are the results.

Putting your spouse down in front of your children is the biggest mistake you can make during and after divorce, followed closely by using your kids as messengers and interfering with visitation. These were some of the findings of a recent survey of some of the top divorce and family law attorneys in the U.S.A.

"It's imperative that divorcing parents put their children before their legal battles," said Mike McCurley, past-president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML). "It's important for parents to remember that their actions during divorce can have long-term consequences. Children are part-mom and part-dad and need both parents in their lives."

In order of frequency, the biggest mistakes parent make are:

- Denigrating the other spouse.
- Using the child as a messenger.
- Interfering with visitation rights.
- Sharing intimate details of the other spouse's infidelity, behavior, etc.

- Failing to pay support/adequately supporting the children.
- Immediately introducing the children to the parent's new love interest.
- Moving the child as far away as possible from the other parent.
- Listening to the child's conversations with the other parent.
- Having the child read all the legal pleadings or having him or her contact the lawyer.
- Having the child request money from the other spouse.
- Fleeing a jurisdiction with an infant, changing names and saying the mother was dead.
- Forcing children to testify in custody proceedings.
- Causing the arrest of the spouse, then photographing the spouse in handcuffs and showing the photo to the kids.
- Using false allegations of child sexual abuse to gain custody of the kids and/or the favor of the court.

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

## Check It Out!!

KIDS Services now has their own website:  
[www.kidsservices.net](http://www.kidsservices.net)

You can now find information online about Supervised Access, our hours, contact information, fees and services, grant funding, our facility and registration.

You can also download information on our policies and

procedures, registration forms, payment policy, and forms for grant funding, as well as back issues of our monthly newsletters.

Also available is information on our parenting classes, including days and times of classes.

## Warning Signs of Parental Alienation By Sherrie Bennett

How can you tell if your ex is attempting to alienate your child? Here are some warning symptoms psychologists have observed in children suffering from parental alienation syndrome, according to Dr. Douglas Darnall, Ph.D:

- Giving a child a choice as to whether or not to visit with the other parent.
- Telling the child details about the marital relationship or reasons for the divorce.
- Refusing to acknowledge that the child has property and may want to transport possessions between residences.
- Resisting or refusing to cooperate by not allowing the other parent access to school or medical records and schedules of extracurricular activities.
- One parent blaming the other parent for financial problems, breaking up the family, changes in lifestyle, or having a girlfriend or boyfriend.
- Refusing to be flexible with the visitation schedule in order to respond to the child's needs, or scheduling the child in so many activities that the other parent is never given the time to visit.
- Assuming that if a parent has been physically abusive with the other parent, it follows that the parent will assault the child. This assumption is not always true.
- Asking the child to choose one parent over the other.
- The alienating parent encouraging any natural anger the child has toward the other parent.
- A parent or stepparent suggesting changing the child's name or having the stepparent adopt the child.
- When the child cannot give reasons for being angry towards a parent or gives reasons that are vague and without any details.
- Using a child to spy or covertly gather information for the parent's own use.
- Arranging temptations that interfere with the other parent's visitation.
- Reacting with hurt or sadness to a child having a good time with the other parent.
- Asking the child about the other parent's personal life.
- Physically or psychologically rescuing a child when there is no threat to their safety.
- Making demands on the other parent that are contrary to court orders.
- Listening in on the child's phone conversation with the other parent.

*[www.family-law.lawyers.com](http://www.family-law.lawyers.com)*

## What Does Your Child Need Most?

1. Hugs
2. Patience
3. Acceptance
4. To feel important
5. A sense of belonging
6. A sense of humor
7. Home—a safe haven
8. Common sense
9. Prayer
10. Laughter
11. Routine
12. Firm boundaries
13. To know mom and dad love them
14. Freedom to fail
15. LOVE LOVE LOVE

## KIDS Services

(Kids In Divorce Support Services)

7950 W. King Street  
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## Parent Education

*Becoming a Love and Logic Single Parent*

Wednesday Evenings 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

*Parenting Skills for Teen Parents*

Every Saturday 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

*Nonviolent Family Skills Program*

Call for days and times

*Smart Steps for Stepfamilies*

Call for days and times

*Nurturing Fathers*

Call for days and times

*Skills Program for Families in Substance Abuse  
Treatment and Recovery*

Call for days and times

*Training the Non-Professional Provider of Supervised  
Visitation*

First Sunday of the month 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

## Some Of Our Favorite Websites

[www.kidsservices.net](http://www.kidsservices.net)

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

[www.about.com/parenting/](http://www.about.com/parenting/)

[www.celebratingfamilies.net](http://www.celebratingfamilies.net)

[www.childparenting.about.com](http://www.childparenting.about.com)

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

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

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

[www.divorcesupport.about.com](http://www.divorcesupport.about.com)

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

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.kidsinthemiddle.org](http://www.kidsinthemiddle.org)

[www.kidsturncentral.com/topics/issues/divorce.htm](http://www.kidsturncentral.com/topics/issues/divorce.htm)

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

[www.montanameth.org](http://www.montanameth.org)

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

[www.parenting-advice.net](http://www.parenting-advice.net)

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

[www.parenting.org](http://www.parenting.org)

[www.practicalparent.org.uk](http://www.practicalparent.org.uk)

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