



how to explain your divorce to your children

As a divorcing or divorced parent with children, there are some basic rules you can follow to help make it easier for your children to mourn, to cope with and to accept the sense of loss that they will inevitably be feeling.

Firstly, always tell your children the truth. Fabrications will be discovered sooner or later and will confuse your children about the real reason for your divorce. Dishonesty about your divorce will also cause your children to doubt other things you tell them.

Secondly, do not wait for your children to ask questions. Instead, take the initiative. Just because they have not asked questions so far does not mean that they do not want information. It may mean they are taking their cues from you. If you are open, not blaming and calm when talking about your divorce, then pertinent facts, feelings and information will be shared naturally.

Thirdly, aim to tell your children what they can reasonably understand at their particular age and level of maturity. Most four year olds, for example, can barely understand the concept of divorce but by the age of eleven or twelve children are very interested in important details such as how contact and residence are decided.

The most important rule when talking to your children is - always tell the truth.

Divorce can be especially difficult for teenage children some further suggestions that we would give to help them are:

- Encourage but do not force your teenager to express their feelings

- Expect your teenager to have some feelings that are different from yours
- Be available for your teenager, but do not expect him or her to spend a lot of time with you
- If either you or your teenager is having difficulties, consider seeking professional help

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How much should I tell my children?

There are certain facts and feelings that your children need to know to be able to accept your divorce. This is not the same, however, as discussing everything related to the divorce. When people divorce they usually feel the need to go over and over the numerous small events that led up to divorce. It is also natural to want to share with someone all the details of the divorce process. Do not make your children bear this burden. They have enough to deal with already.

Which emotions might my children experience?

Once you talk to your children about divorce there are a wide range of emotions that they may experience. These can include things such as grief, depression, guilt, anger, low self esteem, fear, anxiety, isolation and loneliness. It is important for parents to understand that your children may experience difficulties and consider seeking professional help if you or your children are struggling to cope.