

TEN TIPS FOR DIVORCING PARENTS

Divorce is never easy on kids, but there are many ways parents can help lessen the impact of their break-up on their children:

Never disparage your former spouse in front of your children. *Because children know they are “part mom” and “part dad,” the criticism can batter the child’s self-esteem.*

Do not use your children as messengers between you and your former spouse. *The less the children feel a part of the battle between the parents, the better.*

Reassure your children that they are loved and that the divorce is not their fault. *Many children assume that they are to blame for their parents’ hostility.*

Encourage your children to see the former spouse frequently. *Do everything within your power to accommodate the visitation.*

At every step during your divorce, remind yourself that your children’s interests – not yours – are paramount, and act accordingly. *Lavish them with love at every opportunity.*

Your children may be tempted to act as your caretaker. Resist the temptation to let them. *Let your peers, adult family members, and mental health professionals be your counselors and sounding board. Let your children be children.*

If you have a drinking or drug problem, get counseling right away. *Any impairment inhibits your ability to reassure your children and give them the attention they need at this difficult time.*

If you are the non-custodial parent, pay your child support. *The loss of income facing many children after divorce puts them at a financial disadvantage that has a pervasive effect on the rest of their lives.*

If you are the custodial parent and you are not receiving child support, do not tell you children. *It feeds into the child’s sense of abandonment and further erodes his or her stability.*

If at all possible, do not uproot your children. *Stability in their residence and school life helps buffer children from the trauma of their parents’ divorce.*