



Tools for Managing Divorce and Remarriage with Your Kids

Divorce creates a huge amount of stress for children. Children must learn to adjust to their parents not living in the same house, seeing one parent on the weekend or every other week, and in some cases one parent might be absent altogether. It can be tough for kids to manage shuffling back and forth between homes. Parenting styles and rules may be different. Schedules and bedtimes might not be the same and there are a lot of changes that occur at once when parents are dealing with their own feelings.

Remarriage- A parent getting remarried isn't just bringing two people together but is bringing several people together. Each family has a set of values, ideals, traditions, and routines that will be affected. If there are religious differences, or cultural differences that will come into play as well. Not all families come together as seamlessly as the Brady Bunch, Modern Family or The Fosters. Maybe your biological child is an only child, but will now become a middle child as you marry someone with children. That is a big role reversal and your child now having to 'share' you with your new spouse and step children can create resentment and will take a little time to settle in to this new environment.

Structure and Routine - Blended families with children and/or a special needs child will require a tremendous amount of patience and understanding.

Parents getting divorced or remarried, gaining step siblings, advancing a grade or changing schools, are all big events that can be exciting and fun, but also due to the amount of change can be extremely stressful.

What can I do to help my child?

There are 7 Benefits of Keeping Routines with Your Children through Divorce and Remarriage

- 1 *Eliminate power struggles* – this activity is just what we do at this time, there is no yelling or nagging
- 2 *Help kids cooperate* – by reducing stress and there is fair warning with transition times
- 3 *Help kids learn to take charge of their own activities* – kids learn responsibility without needing constant reminders, this increases their self-esteem and independence
- 4 *How to accommodate and adjust-* Kids learn the concept of “looking forward to things that they enjoy”
- 5 *Regular routines* help kids get on a schedule - consistency
- 6 Routines help parents *build connection* – helps to build intimacy
- 7 *Schedules* help parents maintain consistency in expectations – builds healthy habits



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Keeping structure and routine is vital. Another thing you can do is to help your child recognize what stress looks and feels like. Some common symptoms of child stress behaviors include:

- Frequent headaches and stomachaches
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Anxiety or constant worry
- Anger or frequent tantrums
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Increased dependency or clinginess
- Regressed behaviors
- Biting, kicking, hitting
- Impulsive behaviors
- Whining, crying and fighting

Consider counseling. Play therapy and expressive therapies are a terrific way for kids to process big emotions and develop a positive way to understand what is happening. Getting an objective opinion can be very valuable to make sure that you are doing everything within your power to have a “good divorce” or a “smooth transition for a blended new family.” Putting your child’s needs first during this difficult change in the family will ensure that they will have healthy, peaceful relationships during times of transition.