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A Strange New World: 8 Keys to Help Your Children Cope and Adjust to Life After Divorce

Going through a divorce is extremely difficult for everyone involved. Once the divorce is finalized, adults are often ready to try to put the past behind them and move forward. In most cases, however, the children are still going to be struggling to adjust to this new life. All children are different, but it can take months before they begin to settle into the new routines.

It is the job of the parents to do everything they can to help make this transition easier. There are many different things that can be done to help minimize the stress on the children, which will make life easier for everyone involved. Of course, the specific steps that are taken will depend on the age of the kids and other factors. Learning all you can about how to help your children now, however, will always help them to have a happy and healthy future.

Do Not Talk Bad About Your Ex with Children Around

This is one of the most obvious tips out there, but it is surprisingly difficult to follow. When your kids get upset with you about something that is your ex's fault, it is very tempting to just point the finger. While it may be easy, it is not a healthy way to handle conflict or disagreements. As difficult as it might be, it is in the best interest of your children to always do everything you can to help ensure they have a positive relationship with both you and their other parent. Of course, if there is any type of abuse or neglect, you do need to put their safety first.

Take Care of Yourself

In order to help your children cope with the changes in life, you need to be able to cope with them yourself. Consider seeing a professional therapist who can help you with your emotions. Also, make sure you have a circle of friends and family who will be there for you during difficult times. There is certainly nothing wrong with needing help from time to time, and taking care of yourself will put you in a strong position to take care of your children too.

Never Make Plans for the Other Parent's Time Without Confirming with Your Ex First

Kids are constantly asking to go places and do things, and parents love being able to do it. If your child asks you to do something with them on a day when they will be with your ex, don't say yes yet! Many parents are able to trade days or make adjustments, but don't assume that will be the case until you have confirmed it with your ex. Your kids have experienced enough instability and change in their life already, it is best to tell them you'll think about it before confirming so they don't get disappointed. This will also help avoid unnecessary fights with your ex.

Go to the Door when Picking Up Your Children

When picking up your children for your parenting time, don't just sit in the car and honk the horn for them to come out. Go to the door and wait outside (unless invited in) for them to come. This may seem like a small thing, but it helps to show your children that they are valued.

Encourage Questions – Give Honest, Age Appropriate Answers

No matter what the situation, children are full of questions. This is especially true during and just after their parents get a divorce. Don't blow them off or ignore them. Encourage them to be very honest about their feelings and questions. When answering the questions, make sure you are honest with them, but use good judgment on how much you tell them. Remember, it is completely acceptable to tell them that some parts of the divorce are none of their business (using nicer phrasing of course). Providing them with age appropriate answers to their questions will help them to put their anxieties to rest much more quickly.

Listen Listen Listen!

Similar to answering questions, you want to listen to your children. Kids crave their parent's attention (even if they won't admit it). Turning off the radio in the car, putting down the phone in the house, and just letting your children talk about whatever they want is very important. Many conversations may start out very trivial, but can lead to deep topics that they really need to get off their chest. Even the small talk is important as it shows your children that they are valued and worth spending time on.

Remember that Children Can Have Bad Days Too

In the time after the divorce, you will undoubtedly have good days and bad days. You will be going through an 'emotional roller-coaster' and it will likely affect just about every other area of life. This is completely understandable, and everyone will be patient while you adjust. Keep in mind that your children will also be going through these same types of ups and downs.

When kids have bad days, they may act out, become gloomy, or otherwise behave in ways that is not desirable. While it is certainly your job to help teach them to handle their emotions in a healthy way, it is also important to be patient with them during this time. In many instances, they may simply need some extra love and attention rather than a punishment for questionable behavior.

Go Slow with New Relationships

After a divorce, especially if it was drawn out, many people are eager to get out there and meet new people. This can lead to romantic relationships. While there is not necessarily anything wrong with looking for a future spouse, you want to make sure you take it slow when it comes to the children. Your kids are just starting to adapt to their new way of life without both their parents being together, quickly moving on to a new partner can be extremely confusing and stressful. You'll likely have time to date while your kids are with your ex, and there is no rush to introduce them to someone new.

While there is no doubt that this is going to be a difficult time for both you and your children, it is something you can get through together. Always put your kids first in all your decisions and they will, slowly but surely, adapt to their new post-divorce life.