



DAVID R. WEISKOTTEN, Ph.D.

Licensed Professional Counselor

541 Roberts Road ~ Nazareth, PA 18064 ~ 610-746-9588

davidweiskotten.com ~ david@davidweiskotten.com

HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO DIVORCE

Research suggests that with parental support most children can adjust fairly well to divorce. However, the amount of emotional harm children experience is directly related to the quality of the parents' relationship. The more tension and conflict in the parents' relationship the more emotional harm the children are likely to experience.

Following are some tips for parents from researchers at the University of Rochester:

- ✓ Once a firm decision is made about separation or divorce, tell children ahead of time in a way they can understand. If possible, parents should tell their children together.
- ✓ Children need time to adjust to each family change, such as moving, visitation and remarriage.
- ✓ Accept children's feelings and help them learn to talk about their feelings.
- ✓ Make sure children know you love them, that you will take care of them and that the divorce is not their fault. Remind them that parents divorce each other, not their children, and that your love for them will endure.
- ✓ Let your children continue to be children. Encourage school activities and hobbies that develop their strengths and abilities. Discussing family finances with them, or designating them the "little man" or "little woman" of the house can be a burden, and so can giving them too many "adult" responsibilities.
- ✓ Do not criticize the other parent in front of the children. They benefit from a positive relationship with both parents.
- ✓ Talk with your children about how to make things better or more comfortable for them.
- ✓ Set aside 15 minutes each day to spend with each child, doing things together such as reading a book, playing a game or taking a walk.
- ✓ Keep arguments with the other parent as far away from children as possible. Do not use your child as a messenger or a weapon to get back at the former spouse.
- ✓ Keep as much structure and predictability in your everyday routine as possible. Children thrive on routine including regular bedtimes, meals together and consistent rules.
- ✓ Pay attention to what your children say and do.

I hope this Helping Children Adjust to Divorce Tip Sheet has been helpful to you. Feel free to forward it to a friend. To obtain professional support for your concerns please contact me, David Weiskotten Ph.D., at 610-746-9588.