



Family Centre Information Package

Separation, Divorce, and your children

Separations and Divorce is often a scary time for children, Parents often hear about how horrible divorce impacts their children but there is not a lot of discussion about how divorce/separation can positively impact children. Here are 5 benefits your child can get from your divorce:

1. They learn positive ways to problem solve and set boundaries!
 - Kids are aware when there is a problem in the home, When marital issues are resolved through divorce, they see firsthand how to handle the stress and anger appropriately
2. There is more one-on-one time with each parent
 - What comes out of co-parenting? The kids end up having a lot of one-on-one time with each parent, the time parents spend engaged in one-on-one with their children had a huge impact on their kids!
3. There will be more happiness
 - Children benefit from love and structure, so as long as that is established, there will be happiness.
4. It can build communication skills
 - Living in two households gives kids good communication skills. There is a lot to keep track of with children! Although it is not good to make the children the messenger between parents, but if parents have good communication between each other and the children
5. They are stronger, and can have a better life
 - Children are resilient, and strong. In life there are often obstacles, issues, and problems, but we can solve them – even kids can work through them and it can make them even stronger and able to excel

BREAKING THE NEWS

As soon as you're certain of your plans, talk to your kids about your decision to live apart. Although there's no easy way to break the news, if possible have both parents there for this conversation. It's important to try to leave feelings of anger, guilt, or blame out of it. Practice how you're going to manage telling your kids so you don't become upset or angry during the talk.

The discussion should fit the child's age, maturity, and temperament. But it should always include this message: What happened is between mom and dad and is ***not the child's fault.***

Tell your kids that sometimes adults change the way they love each other or can't agree on things and so they have to live apart. But remind them that kids and parents are tied together for life, by birth or adoption.

Remember that **kids don't need to know all the reasons behind a divorce.** It's enough for them to understand what will change in their daily routine — and, just as important, what will not.

With younger kids, it's best to keep it simple. You might say something like: "Mom and dad are going to live in different houses so they don't fight so much, but we both love you very much."

HANDLING THEIR REACTIONS

Whether your kids express fear, worry, or relief about your separation and divorce, they'll want to know how their own day-to-day lives might change.

Be prepared to answer these and other questions:

- Who will I live with?
- Where will I go to school?
- Will I move?
- Where will each parent live?
- Where will we spend holidays?
- Will I still get to see my friends?
- Can I still go to camp this summer?
- Can I still do my favorite activities?

Being honest is not always easy when you don't have all the answers or when kids are feeling scared or guilty about what's going on. But telling them what they need to know at that moment can assist them in feeling more at ease.

HELPING KIDS COPE

Here are some ways to help kids cope with the upset of a divorce:

- **Encourage honesty.** Kids need to know that their feelings are important to their parents and that they'll be taken seriously.
- **Help them put their feelings into words.** Kids' behavior can often clue you in to their feelings of sadness or anger. Be a good listener, even if it's difficult for you to hear what they have to say.
- **Legitimize their feelings.** Saying "I know you feel sad now" or "I know it feels lonely without dad here" lets kids know that their feelings are valid. It's important to encourage kids to get it all out before you start offering ways to make it better. Let kids know it's also OK to feel happy or relieved or excited about the future.
- **Offer support.** Ask, "What do you think will help you feel better?" They might not be able to name something, but you can suggest a few ideas — maybe just to sit together, take a walk, or hold a favorite stuffed animal or even a phone call to the other parent
- **Keep yourself healthy.** For adults, separation and divorce is highly stressful. That pressure may be amplified by custody, property, and financial issues, which can bring out the worst in people.
- **Keep the details in check.** Take care to ensure privacy when discussing the details of the divorce with friends, family, or your lawyer. Try to keep your interactions with your children's other parent as civil as possible, especially when you're interacting in front of the kids.

- **Get help.** This is not the time to go it alone. Find a support group, talk to others who have gone through this, use online resources, or ask your doctor or religious leaders to refer you to other resources. Getting help yourself sets a good example for your kids on how to make a healthy adjustment to this major change.

FAMILY CENTRE SUPPORTS

Family centre offers [Worry Dragons](#), it is a group for children (ages 7 to 12) where they can learn to express their fears, worries, and anxieties, while helping to incorporate parents into their growth so they can have an active role in maintaining their children's growth and learning

Family Centre also offers [Building Families That Thrive](#), which is a group that allows either one of both parents to attend with or without their children. Throughout the group parents and children will explore the impacts of stress on families, the building blocks of family relationships, and parenting ideas.

Family Centre also offers individual and family counselling services (ages 7+). If you are interested in scheduling a counselling session, please call Family Centre (403) 320-4232 extension 240, to speak to an intake counsellor.

Family Centre offers the Kin Family Resource Library. Visitors to the library have access to books, videos, DVDs, and magazines that cover a variety of topics, including anxiety. The library offers resources that are targeted towards parents as well as resources suitable for children. The Kin Family Resource Library is a free service; all that is required is a Family Centre library card, which is available at reception. To search and reserve available resources click [here](#).

RESOURCES

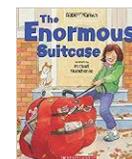
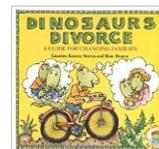
LOCAL RESOURCES

- YWCA Lethbridge & District 403-329-0088
 - 604 8 Street S., Lethbridge AB, T1J2K1
 - offers Project Child Recovery. Which is a free program for children (or teens) that have witnessed violence and/or dealing with their parents' divorce
- Lethbridge Family Services Counselling 403-327-5724
 - 1107 2A Avenue N., Lethbridge, AB T1H 0E6
 - LFS provides counselling services to individuals, both adults and children, who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, including anxiety. Subsidies may be available.
- Associates Counselling Services 403-381-6000
 - 239 12B Street N., Lethbridge, AB, T1H 2K8
 - Associates is an association of independent professionals and offers a wide range of counselling services, including family and child/youth counselling. Subsidies may be available.
- Crossroads Counselling Centre 403-327-7080
 - 202 – 542 7 St. S, Lethbridge, AB, T1J 2H1
 - Crossroads offers counselling to individuals, couples, and families for a variety

of concerns. Subsidies may be available.

BOOKS

- *Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families* by Laurene Kransy Brown and Marc Brown: In this book you will learn to talk to each other about one of life's most difficult moments. It can assist in building a bridge to communicate with your child but through the dinosaurs that are themselves experiencing divorce.
- *The Enormous Suitcase* by Robert Munsch: A charming story about a girl making the best of her co-parenting situation, and the mom and dad (and dog!) who love her.
- *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst: in this book Karst explores a simple way of overcoming loneliness and separation from parents.



OTHER

- Distress Line 403-327-7905
 - Crisis intervention. Listeners are available 24 hours a day
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
 - Provides confidential, bilingual telephone and web counselling to children and young adults (up to age 25) experiencing problems or concerns
- Families Change Website <http://ab.familieschange.ca/en#>
- Ted Talk: Tamara D. Afifi: The Impact of Divorce on Children <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKcNyfXbQzQ>

REFERENCES

- <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/help-child-divorce.html#>
- http://thestir.cafemom.com/being_a_mom/185137/5_reasons_divorce_is_good