

HELPING KIDS THROUGH SEPARATION/DIVORCE:

- ❖ The way in which parents manage their separation/divorce impacts their children; each individual can make a difference by their OWN choice of behaviors
- ❖ In separation/divorce, co-parents need to shift their former intimate relationship to that of neutral business associates linked for the long-term in the “business of co-parenting”
- ❖ Children’s needs and feelings should be a priority; they require reassurance that they are loved by both parents and belong to both parents and extended families
- ❖ Giving kids permission and opportunities to be attached and to maintain relationships with both parents/families is important to their well being and growth/development
(*some exceptions: family violence, substance abuse, profound mental health issues)
- ❖ Conflict is typically a part of separation/divorce; how it is managed has an impact on outcomes for children; kids need to be kept out of “adult issues” including parent conflict and encouraged to regain and resume their own life pursuits to meet their developmental ages/stages
- ❖ Most often children view separation/divorce differently than the adults involved as they do not always see it as a way of improving their life; parents can be sensitive to this difference in perspective
- ❖ Children need understanding and guidance to manage and communicate their unique feelings and behaviors through the process of separation/divorce
- ❖ Shame, blame and embarrassment are feelings that children may express; they need reassurance and age appropriate explanations that separation/divorce is not their fault
- ❖ Attention to the variety of loss/grief reactions of both adults and kids is important through separation/divorce; Examples: sadness, anxiety, fear, anger and feeling physically unwell
- ❖ Parents may be less available for their children particularly in the first year of separation/divorce (“diminished parenting”); this may negatively impact kids outcomes as they need their parents most at this time of change and transitions
- ❖ When possible, minimizing and “pacing” the multiple changes in their lives as a result of the separation/divorce is helpful for kids; strive for predictability and routines
- ❖ Transitioning between two households can be difficult for some children; each parent can help their children to manage this challenge with sensitivity, organization and support
- ❖ A Parenting Plan is an essential working document that helps provide a framework for adults and children to manage the separation/divorce; a detailed plan that is reviewed regularly helps address the family’s changing needs
- ❖ An individual’s influence and/or control with their co-parent is typically limited; their focus and energy is better placed on developing a consistent life with their children in their own home

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