

Public speaking, private consultations, self-help books & CDs covering sex therapy, parenting and self-development	<h1 style="margin: 0;">DR JANET HALL</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST & HYPNOTHERAPIST</p>	
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Dr Janet Hall's newsletter



How Can Separating Families Avoid Fights, And Parents Help Their Kids Cope With Change?

By Dr Janet Hall



When Their Parents Separate, Children Need: Unconditional Love, Routine, Security, No Drama and No Guilt!



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 How do you know if you are helping your kids through separation?

Here are some signs of success in kids who are adjusting well to their parents being divorced.

1. The children are encouraged to form their own non-biased opinions of their parents (and step-parents).
2. The parents neither make the ex the "saint" or the "sinner".
3. The parents encourage expression of anger, hurt, loneliness and tears.
4. Scheduling conflicts are handled respectfully by the parents.
5. The children have role models of happy relationships.
6. Each parent reaffirms the child's self-worth.
7. Parents keep good personal boundaries (80 percent of the parent's personal business is none of the child's business).
8. The parents don't try to do everything for their children.
9. Everyone keeps a sense of humour.

Here Are Some Hot Tips For Parents To Handle Separation To Protect Their Children From Unnecessary And Hurtful Fights.

Highly recommended things to **AVOID** doing!

- Don't put down the other parent in front of the child.
- Don't bring up contentious issues with the other parent in front of your child.
- Don't use the child as a messenger or spy.
- Don't question the child excessively about activities with the other parent.
- Don't put messages in money (eg. If you love me more than him, I will buy you a gift).
- Don't expect consistent loyalty - children can often be fickle.
- Don't indulge all the child's whims by being extravagant with clothes and presents and always taking them to "Disneyland" places.
- Don't involve your child in excessive adult conversations regarding adult themes.

Highly recommended things to do:

Do tell your children that they do not have to feel like "the meat in the sandwich" - it's not their fault.

Do encourage the child to find a good, safe friend to share their thoughts and feelings with.

Do help everyone to accept that a family separation is a big trauma and we all need compassion.

Do get help for yourself - parents need to be willing to find as much help as you need to adjust and get even stronger.

Do tell your children to tell themselves every day, "The divorce is between my parents and I am not divorcing either of them!"

Do reassure the children that they will be safe and secure in terms of money, school, home and access to both parents.

Do tell your children that you will both always love them - no matter what happens.

Do be willing to show that you want to hear their feelings and don't offer glib solutions to their problems.

Do promise that you will tell them what's changing and may concern them, in plenty of time for them to get used to the idea.

Do remind yourself that you can't fix everything.

Do tell the children that sometimes you may be overwhelmed by your own feelings and if this happens, they don't have to fix you!

Do expect denial and allow healing to happen at its own speed to suit each person's personality.

Do remind them and you, that parenting is for life - even though marriages may not be.

Do separate fact from fantasy and don't be a "Disneyland Dad or Martyred Mum".

Do be honest but take care that you only explain the separation appropriate to the child's age and understanding.

Do be alert to feelings and create an environment where feelings can always be discussed.

Do show you understand the child's feelings towards you and the other parent.

Do keep arrangements consistent. At a time of change and loss a child needs the comfort of a regular routine and regular activities.

Do reassure the child that you are okay when they are not there and you will be there when they return from spending time with the other parent.

Do acknowledge the other parent's role and contribution to the child's life.

Do keep thinking about what is best for the child and remember that a child will sense your emotions and copy those emotions accordingly.

Do remember that because children live so much "in the present" they need to be taught that time makes things better. Reassure them that change happens - and happiness - like summer holidays - returns in time.

Parents need to acknowledge their children's flexibility - encouraging and praising their ability to adapt.

Do allow the child the right to love both of you - don't make your child choose between you and don't turn your child against the other parent or their family!

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