

Talking to Your Children About Divorce



Having “the talk” with your children is no easy task, and it is generally not a one-time event. Depending on your child’s age, the conversation will likely be repeated many times as your child matures and/or major life changes occur such as a remarriage. There is no one best way to explain it but parents can get close.

Allow plenty of time for questions and reassure them both parents love them. It is key that children don’t feel abandoned by either parent and understand the divorce is not their fault.

Do’s of “The Talk”

- If possible, have both parents speak to the children together in a calm manner and without intense emotion
- Tell all siblings at the same time
- Have certain details worked out beforehand so parents can explain to the children how their time will be spent between the divorcing parents and what major changes will happen to their lifestyle
- Parents should stand united and try to back each other up while leaving their differences to other situations
- Help children understand it is not their fault and that the parents are sorry that the divorce will cause challenges for the children
- Have the conversation in a place where children can be free to ask questions
- Encourage children to be open and express themselves

Don’ts of “The Talk”

- Don’t warn the children beforehand that a discussion is coming; this often leads to unnecessary anxiety
- Don’t tell friends or family members before telling the children; these messages get back to the children, leading to issues of distrust and more anxiety
- Don’t have the conversation in a public place
- Don’t have the conversation on a special holiday or birthday; this can ruin that date for the children
- Don’t present the information when children are tired, sick, hungry, or when there will be no time for them to process the information
- Don’t worry a child with a parent’s own unhappiness or irritability