



ONE HEART, TWO HOMES

Co-parenting support for divorced parents, single parents and children of divorced families

As featured in the book: **Co-parenting Works! Helping Children Thrive after Divorce**

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SIX RISK FACTORS for Children of Divorce.

(Solutions to counteract added by Jay and Tammy Daughtry)

Researchers have identified six predictable risks for children after divorce¹. This information is helpful to share with parents so they can intentionally work against the risks with positive behaviors.

- **Parental Loss: Losing contact with one parent completely or having contact minimized drastically. Losing emotional connection with a parent.**
 - Increase time spent with each bio parent as much as possible. Children thrive when they have access to both parents, emotionally and physically. Encourage your child to spend time with the other parent. By respecting the other parent and supporting them you are helping heal your child.

If a parent is not active in the children's lives:
 - Enlist an intentional mentor. Find a man or woman who will walk with you and help fill in the gaps. Programs like the Big Brother/Big Sister organization can be a help.
 - Enlist a surrogate grandparent. Ask an older person in your church or community to be part of your family's life, helping to plug the hole left by an absent parent.
 - Enroll your child in a program that fosters community with other kids and leaders, such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts.
 - Talk to one or two of your kids' aunts or uncles in your immediate family. Tell them your concerns; ask them to step in and help. One young man I know of, Anthony, at the age of thirteen stepped into the role of being a male mentor to his nephew after his nephew's father walked out of his life. I don't know whether someone asked Anthony or he simply saw the need and moved to fill it, but either way, it's now eighteen years later and Anthony has been that young man's father figure all this time! He recently drove fourteen hours each way to enroll his nephew in college. He talks to his nephew every week to see how he's doing in college, what books he needs for class, who he's dating and what they're up to—and he challenges his nephew and holds him accountable. Anthony, age thirty-three, has been a father to the fatherless for eighteen years.
 - There are solutions. We owe it to our kids to be resourceful and find them. We can't be too prideful or too embarrassed. For the sake of our kids, we must look the obstacles straight in the eye and find a solution.
- **Economic Loss: Reduced cash flow in the household as well as less money for "fun" with kids.**
 - Don't overspend or try to "fix" things by buying more than you can afford.
 - Consolidate life and sell things that are not needed. Downsize!

¹ Amato, P. R. (1993). Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypotheses, and empirical support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 23-38. / Kelly, J. B., & Emery, R. E. (2003). Children's adjustment following divorce: Risk and resiliency perspectives. *Family Relations*, 52, 352-362.

- Consider a roommate who might live with you and help financially.
 - Use time creatively without spending money: walks at the park, play games at home, paint or draw with the kids, read together, write together, feed the ducks at the lake.
 - Ask for help when needed, don't be embarrassed.
- **Lack of Parental Competence: Not knowing what to do or how to handle crisis. No one to help in decision making. No backup system or other adult in the home to help with daily tasks.**
 - Attend classes to gain general parent-child information.
 - Don't parent out of guilt – children need strong boundaries and continued discipline. Don't stop being an engaged and concerned parent because of the divorce. Hold to your expectations with school, homework, chores, curfew, boundaries, etc.
 - Increase communication with the other bio parent and try to support each other. Even though you will parent differently, support each other's decisions and discipline efforts.
 - Read books on parenting and discuss with those "ahead of you" in the journey.
 - Enlist parenting mentors to help in decision making.
 - Seek counseling or support from a social worker or guidance counselor at child's school.
 - Don't try to be the favorite – that never works in the long run.
- **More Life Stress for Children: Transition from having one home to having two homes causes high anxiety in kids. Visitation is a stressful experience for children, especially with hostile parents.**
 - Keep the kids in the same school if possible, even if you have to move to accomplish that.
 - Make every effort to allow them to continue in their extracurricular activities: band, dance, swimming, scouting, sports, and so on.
 - Help them find someone to talk to: a guidance counselor at school, a children's counselor, another trusted parent with whom your child is comfortable, a youth pastor or coach. Kids always need an outlet other than parents, and kids who find a caring adult who can fill that role are blessed. Those relationships often extend well into adulthood. Be intentional—find someone they can air their pain and frustrations with.
 - Don't over-schedule your life. Allow time and space to relax and enjoy the children, to take walks around the park and be together. Even though you may find it's better for you to "keep busy" to keep your mind off the divorce, it's best to follow that pattern when the kids are at the other parent's house. When they're with you, try to slow down. Take time to bake cookies, plant flowers, walk the dog together, go hiking, and just relax.
 - If you do have to move, help the kids keep in touch with friends, either by arranging visits or weekly chats on Skype.
 - Let your kids grieve—they feel it, and they need to say it. Listen to them with love.
 - Keep as many "familiar" things in their environment—bedspreads, toys, etc.—as you can.
 - Remind them that you are a family, no matter what walls you live within.
- **Parental Adjustment to the Divorce: The better a parents adjusts the more likely a child will.**
 - DivorceCare – go to website www.DivorceCare.org and put in your zip code
 - DivorceCare4Kids – to website DK4K.org and find local classes by zip code
 - GriefShare – go to website www.GriefShare.org and put in your zip code
 - Find healthy-minded friendships - find at least three "3:00 AM friends!" These are people who can keep an eye on you and will be willing to ask hard questions along the way.
 - Eat healthy, exercise, stay active and do not isolate yourself emotionally or physically.
 - Avoid extensive alcoholic intake, drugs, numbing out sexual relationships
 - Be aware of the "rebound relationship" and how that could hurt you and your kids!
 - Give your heart and emotions time to heal and do the work necessary to not carry pain forward.

- **Inter-parental Conflict: High stress between parents is damaging to children.**
 - Leave the children out of the conversations. Never discuss issues at transition. Instead, coordinate a compartmentalized way to have co-parent meetings via phone or in person.
 - Attend co-parenting classes and seek advice from co-parenting coaches or counselors.
 - Schedule co-parenting meetings away from the child's observation or overhearing to do the hard work of co-parenting. Never put the children in the middle to do the work of parenting.
 - Put the children first in all decisions, schedules and interactions. What is best for the child?
 - Maintain self control in communication with the other parent. Put the effort into being parents not discussing the past or anything related to the failed marriage.
 - Use an agenda in the co-parenting meetings, to stay on task and table topics when needed.
 - If the conflict is too high enlist a mediator, counselor or pastor to help in communication.

Co-Parenting International has created resources to support communication and offer intervention strategies for divorced and remarried parents on the topic of “co-parenting.” We believe a child can adjust and thrive if co-parents communicate and work together as a cooperative colleagues. Resources are relevant for individual, conjoint and group counseling.

- ***Co-parenting Works! Helping Your Children Thrive after Divorce***: Softback book by Tammy G. Daughtry, Founder of Co-Parenting International. Also available in audio and electronic formats. Chapter by chapter this unpacks the journey of co-parenting and helps parents have life-giving strategies to raise amazing kids. Table of Contents and extensive endorsements available on the website.
- ***One Heart, Two Homes* CDs and DVDs**: Content created to motivate co-parents from various perspectives – counselors, pastors, single dads, single moms, step parents and a panel of teens living between two homes – four hours of content, divided into ten unique segments. Available for purchase at conference or via on-line store at www.CoparentingInternational.com.
- ***One Heart, Two Homes* Seminars and Group Classes**: Curriculum for eight hour seminars as well as evening classes for individuals, conjoint co-parent meetings and small group discussions.
- **Co-parenting Meeting Agenda**: Designed to aid communication between co-parents on a monthly basis. Four versions are available: infant/toddler, school aged, teen, adults.

www.CoparentingInternational.com