

Tips for Helping a Child to Adjust to a Divorce

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The following is meant to be used for reflection. It is not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of everything that may help a child following a divorce. Discuss with your therapist any which do not appear to apply in your case.

Hurtful to the Child

- Berating the other parent within earshot of the child
- Quarrelling with the other parent within earshot of the child
- Allowing the child to say negative things about the other parent without challenge**
- Expressing non-verbal anger towards the other parent within earshot of the child
- Questioning the child about the other parents' personal affairs (e.g., child as spy)
- Differing with, or qualifying, positive statements that the child makes about the other parent
- Trying to form a coalition with the child against the other parent
- Threatening to limit access to the other parent
- Threatening to take the other parent to court within earshot of the child
- Rejecting, or qualifying, feelings of loss that the child expresses regarding the other parent
- Communicating to the child, directly or indirectly, that there is a love contest going on (e.g., the child must decide which parent is loved more)
- Staying trapped in feelings of rage or hurt towards the other parent

Helpful to the Child

- Having positive conversations with the other parent within earshot of the child
- Complimenting the other parent within earshot of the child
- Affirming to the child that the other parent loves him or her
- Qualifying or disagreeing with negative statements that the child makes about the other parent
- Putting the child's best interests above any feelings of rage or hurt that are felt towards the other parent
- Keeping the child unaware of any ongoing court battles
- Making peace with the other parent, as quickly and as thoroughly as possible

- Allowing, and welcoming, the child to voice feelings of loss pertaining to the other parent
- Allowing the child to talk about, and play through, feelings pertaining to the divorce
- Providing the child with methods for coping with the divorce (e.g., readings, a child divorce support group, counseling and so forth)
- Parental recovering from the divorce

**The exception is a report of abuse. See your therapist for suggestions on how to deal with this kind of allegation.