

# Telling Your Children About Your Divorce

Navigating a divorce is a challenging journey, and one of the most sensitive aspects is communicating this significant change to your children. This resource guide has been thoughtfully compiled to offer you support and practical advice as you embark on this difficult conversation. Inside you'll find guidance on preparing for the conversation, age-appropriate ways to explain divorce, common reactions to anticipate, and tips for fostering your children's well being during this transition. Remember, you are not alone, and this guide is here to help you navigate this pivotal moment with care and consideration in your children's hearts.

## For All Ages:

- **Keep it Simple and Honest:** Avoid overwhelming details or blaming. Focus on the changes that will directly affect them.
- **Reassure Them It's Not Their Fault:** This is crucial for children of all ages. Emphasize that the divorce is between the parents and has nothing to do with them.
- **Emphasize Continued Love:** Make it clear that both parents will continue to love and care for them, even though they won't be living together.
- **Provide Consistent Information:** Both parents should ideally present a united front and share the same basic information.
- **Listen and Validate Feelings:** Create a safe space for them to express their emotions – sadness, anger, confusion, fear – without judgment. Let them know their feelings are normal.
- **Be Patient:** This is a process, not a one-time conversation. They will likely have ongoing questions and need repeated reassurance.
- **Focus on the Future:** While acknowledging the change, try to paint a picture of what their new routines and living arrangements will look like.

## Age-Specific Considerations:

### **Preschoolers (Ages 3-5):**

- Understanding: Their understanding of time and relationships is limited.

Focus on concrete changes.

#### Key Messages:

- "Mommy and Daddy will live in different houses now."
- "Both Mommy and Daddy love you very, very much."
- "You will still see both of us."
- "It's not your fault."

#### How to Communicate:

- Use simple language and repeat key messages.
- Use visual aids like calendars or picture books to illustrate schedules.
- Be prepared for questions like "Why?" and answer simply, e.g., "Mommy and Daddy just can't live together anymore."
- Offer extra hugs and physical affection.

## Age Appropriate Books & Links:

- Talking about Divorce: A Sesame Street ® Resource  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- Two Places to Call Home: A picture book about divorce  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- Dinosaurs Divorce - (Dino Tales: Life Guides for Families) by Marc Brown & Laurie Krasny Brown (Paperback)  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- My Sometimes Feelings - Leah Rubabshi, MSW  
[Link to More Book Info](#)

### **Early Elementary (Ages 6-8):**

- Understanding: They have a better grasp of relationships but may still struggle with the permanence of divorce. They might worry about who will take care of them.

#### Key Messages:

- Reinforce the messages for preschoolers.
- Explain the living arrangements and visitation schedule clearly.
- Address potential fears about changes in their daily routines (school, friends, activities).
- Continue to emphasize it's not their fault.

#### How to Communicate:

- Use more detailed but still clear language.
- Allow them to ask questions and answer them honestly (without oversharing adult details).
- Validate their feelings of sadness or anger.
- Maintain routines as much as possible to provide stability.

#### Age Appropriate Books & Links:

- The Kids' Book of Family Changes: Understanding Divorce and Separation and Managing Feelings  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- It's Not the End of the World - Judy Bloom  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- The List Of Things That Will Not Change - Rebecca Stead  
[Link to More Book Info](#)

### **Late Elementary/Middle School (Ages 9-13):**

- Understanding: They have a more mature understanding of relationships and may be aware of conflict between parents. They might feel angry, confused, or embarrassed. They may also worry about loyalty to each parent.

#### Key Messages:

- Acknowledge that this is a big change and it's okay to have strong feelings.
- Reiterate that they are not to blame.
- Explain the reasons for the divorce in a general, age-appropriate way (avoiding blame).
- Emphasize that it's okay to love both parents and not to take sides.
- Clearly outline the living arrangements and visitation schedule.

#### How to Communicate:

- Have open and honest conversations.
- Listen to their concerns and address them directly.
- Respect their need for privacy and avoid putting them in the middle of adult conflicts.
- Reassure them that their needs will continue to be met.

#### Age Appropriate Books & Links:

- What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce? A Survival Guide for Kids by Kent Winchester and Geoff Williams  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- The Divorce Workbook for Children: Help for Kids by Kids  
[Link to More Book Info](#)

## **High Schoolers (Ages 14-18):**

- Understanding: They have an adult-like understanding of relationships and may have strong opinions or feelings about the divorce. They might worry about the impact on their future, college, or social life.

### Key Messages:

- Treat them with respect and acknowledge their maturity.
- Be honest about the situation without burdening them with excessive detail.
- Discuss how the divorce might affect their lives (e.g., finances, living arrangements).
- Reassure them that their opinions and feelings are valued.
- Emphasize that they are not responsible for taking care of either parent.

### How to Communicate:

- Have open and respectful conversations.
- Listen to their concerns and involve them in decisions that directly affect them when appropriate.
- Respect their boundaries and allow them space if they need it.
- Offer support and resources if they are struggling.

## Age Appropriate Books & Links:

- The Divorce Helpbook for Teens by Cynthia MacGregor  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can  
[Link to More Book Info](#)
- Now What Do I Do?: A Guide to Help Teenagers with Their Parents' Separation or Divorce  
[Link to More Book Info](#)