

The Do's and Don'ts of Helping Your Child Through Divorce

DO—

- Reassure your children that you and the other parent love them and will always take care of them.
- Reassure your children they still have a family and two parents, only now in two homes instead of one.
- Provide as much structure, stability and consistency as possible. This includes continuing to provide age-appropriate discipline, setting boundaries and providing direction.
- Remember your children's need for transition time when they return from the other parent's home.
- Communicate with the other parent.
- Share information with the other parent when you learn of school activities, doctor's appointments, extracurricular activities, etc. Share copies of report cards, your children's work and teachers' notes.
- Let your children know it is okay to love the other parent and to enjoy time with the other parent.
- Reassure your children that they did not cause the break-up.
- Focus on your children; put your anger aside and pay attention to the children's needs.
- Let your children be children: they are not your confidante, not the "man of the house," not your best friend, not your messenger and not your spy.
- Help your child deal with feelings of loss, hurt, sadness and anger in an appropriate way. Model appropriate behavior.
- Allow the children to have pictures of the other parent in their room.

DON'T—

- Talk negatively about the other parent.
- Question your children about the other parent.
- Argue with each other when the children are near or could overhear you.
- Discuss adult issues with your children, like child support, hearings, custody or the other parent's shortcomings.
- Ask your children where they want to live.
- Make your children feel guilty for loving the other parent or for enjoying time with the other parent.
- Ask your children to keep secrets from the other parent.
- Use your children as a messenger to the other parent.
- Expect your children to give you emotional support.
- Withhold visitation OR child support.
- Be tempted to overindulge you children out of guilt: don't teach them the art of manipulation.