10 THINGS KIDS WANT
When Their Parents Separate

By Michelle Garneau

Separation and divorce can be stressful for the entire family. Children may feel like their lives have been turned upside down. They may go through a mixture of emotions including sadness, confusion and guilt. It is most likely this is a new experience for them, and they will need to get used to a number of changes such as having two homes, new schedules and sharing time between their parents to name a few. Parents want to do their best to help their children get through this transition. The good news is that there are some positive ways to ease your child into their new life.

10 most common things children want when their parents separate.

1) To be free to love and be loved by both of their parents without feeling guilty. Being allowed to have a relationship with both parents and not having to choose one parent over the other.
2) For their parents to refrain from saying negative things about one another. At some point children realize that they are "half of mom" and "half of dad" and may personalize any negative comments. Parents talking about one another in a positive, or at least, a neutral way will benefit their children.
3) For their parents to communicate directly with one another about matters concerning the children and not to use them as messengers. This will keep the children out of the middle. Kids should get to be kids, and this is the parents' responsibility.
4) For both parents to attend their extracurricular activities and school events without there being tension. If parents make arrangements with one another ahead of time, this will avoid any surprises and allow it to be a more enjoyable time for all.
5) To be able to openly express their feelings and ask questions about the separation. Parents can reassure them that their feelings are not "wrong" and answer their questions in an age appropriate manner.
6) To know when they are scheduled to be with each parent including the regular parenting time, holidays and special occasions. When children are old enough, parents can put up a calendar and mark the days when they will be with each parent. This will help them to feel more secure.
7) To know that they are able to have ongoing communication with the other parent. There are times when a child misses the other parent and a phone call or video chat can go a long way. The time not seeing or communicating with the other parent seems much longer to a child than to an adult.
8) For their parents to get along. This is a big one! Children do not want to hear any arguing between their parents. If a concern needs to be discussed, it is best for it to be done at a time and place where children will not hear. Witnessing or overhearing conflict between their parents can have damaging effects beyond childhood.
9) To know about any big changes in their lives well ahead of time. Such as when a parent is planning a move or when a parent gets a new partner.
10) To know that they will continue to have a relationship with both parents. A child may fear that a parent may leave them the way the parents left one another. Reassuring them that both parents will be in their lives will help put them at ease.

Children can make it through their parents' separation in a healthy way. And it is possible to eliminate many of the challenges and improve the situation by parents following the things that are important to kids. Staying involved in their lives, not making them choose sides and being positive with one another will give them peace of mind. Getting along and not arguing in front of the children is important in order that they can grow up on schedule and lead healthy, successful and productive lives. If parents keep their children's wants in mind, kids can go through the transition of their parents' separation and come out of it living fulfilled and happy lives.

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