HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN WHEN PARENTING APART

Going through a separation or divorce can have its challenges for your whole family. The way you and your co-parent handle this transition will have big impact on your child's ability to deal with this change. Here are 6 tips to help kids adjust to their new life.

1. Encourage open dialogue with your child.

One of the most difficult things you will have to do when you separate is to tell your child. It is not easy for kids to talk to their parents about divorce, be there when they are ready to talk and be a good listener. Allow them to express their feelings without judgement. Depending on a child's personality, they may need to be encouraged to talk. Each child is unique, and each may need something different from you.

2. Create predictability and consistency.

Parenting schedules vary between families. Having a predictable parenting schedule is important for children. If a child is old enough, it may help them to feel more secure by having their own calendar that shows them when they will see each parent. Children also thrive on consistency. This can mean having similar routines, screen time rules and chore expectations in each parent's home.

3. Connect with important people in your child's life.

There will be several people who will help with the growth and development of your child. These can include teachers, doctors and counsellors. It will be important for each parent to be involved and to receive information and recommendations from these professionals. Attending meetings and appointments, receiving emails or having access to the school portal will allow each parent to receive the same information and will reduce the chance of conflict between them.

4. Maintain a quality relationship.

Allow your child to love each parent equally. Avoid speaking negatively about the other parent or the other parent's family. The quality of a parent's relationship is not about the amount of time the child spends with them. Take an interest in things that are important to them such as their activities, school and hobbies. Creating special time with your child can been done in person or from a distance. Crafting, playing video games or reading can all be done virtually. Whether you spend time with your child in person or through video calls, be fully available without distractions.

5. Learn to communicate as co-parents.

We are not born with good communication skills; this is something we learn. If you and the other parent struggled with communication before your separation, it could become even more difficult when you are living in separate homes. Good communication will be the foundation for your co-parenting relationship. You will need to make decisions, arrange appointments and figure out holiday schedules for your child. Whether it is by text, phone or a co-parenting app, the better you communicate; the smoother things will go. Co-parenting classes or co-parenting counselling are a couple of options that can help you to improve your communication and to build a healthier co-parenting relationship.

6. Resolve parental conflict outside of court.

Conflict between parents is toxic for a child's brain development. This can put them at a higher risk of developing emotional, social and behavioral issues and may have a negative impact on their physical health too. Using an adversarial process such as court can increase tension and conflict. Choosing an out of court process such as Mediation, can reduce fighting and encourage collaboration between co-parents. This process can help you resolve issues in a more civil and calm manner keeping your child out of the middle so they can focus on friends, school and activities.

Parents living in separate homes can have quality relationships with their child. Communicate with your child openly and be present when interacting with them. Have a reliable parenting schedule and consistent routines between homes to help them adapt to the separation. Work on having good communication and reduced conflict between you and the other parent. Keeping these tips in mind will help promote healthy development and build resilience in your child.

If you would like to talk to us about how you can resolve your separation and divorce matters through mediation, we offer a 20-minute free phone consultation that remains confidential. A professionally trained and certified Family Mediator can answer your questions and provide you with support.

Contact Michelle

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