



How to Help Your Children During and After a

By Armand Velardo

When parents become involved in divorce proceedings, the emotional impact on their children is usually brutal and long lasting. Parents can reduce the emotional impact on their children, by utilizing the following tips:

1. Attempt reconciliation.
2. If reconciliation is possible, do not hesitate to place the divorce proceedings on hold.
3. If reconciliation is not possible, do your best not to delay the divorce proceedings.
4. Be honest with yourself, your spouse/ex-spouse, and your children.
5. If you are feeling down/depressed, take an inventory of the good things in your life; place your children first on the list.
6. Suicide is not an option. If you have thoughts of suicide, seek help immediately.
7. It is best if both parents, as a couple, inform their children of their decision to obtain a divorce, and also inform the counselors at the children's schools.
8. Do not argue in front of your children.
9. Do not discuss bedroom issues in front of your children.
10. Put aside your pain and anger, and focus on the best interests of your children.
11. Explain to your children, as often as necessary, that they are not the cause of the divorce.
12. Listen to, and address your children's concerns and feelings.
13. Be alert to signs of distress in your children (aggressiveness, depression, mood swings, loss of self-esteem, poor performance at school, etc.), and immediately attend to such distress and/or seek professional help.
14. Do not attempt to convince your children that your spouse/ex-spouse was the cause of the divorce; they will make their own assessment, if they feel the need to do so, as they grow older.
15. Never make comments to your children that compare them to your spouse/ex-spouse in a negative way.
16. Never, for any reason, resort to physical violence with your spouse/ex-spouse, or children.
17. Provide your children with emotional support, and do not expect them to replace the emotional support you previously received from your spouse.
18. Do not abandon your children no matter what hurdles are placed in front of you by your spouse/ex-spouse.
19. Make your children feel safe and loved at all times.
20. Play an active role in your children's school and other activities during and after the divorce proceedings.
21. Have your children's report cards sent to you and your spouse/ex-spouse.
22. You and your spouse/ex-spouse should exchange copies of any schedules regarding your children's school activities, dates of parent/teacher conferences, etc.
23. Never stop communicating with your spouse/ex-spouse about your children's educational, medical, religious, and daily issues.
24. Stay focused on the big issues: custody, parenting time, child support, property settlement, and spousal support. Do not incur needless legal fees to argue, or fight over insignificant issues.
25. Do not file for a personal protection order to gain leverage in the divorce proceedings.
26. Do not antagonize your spouse to commit an act of domestic violence to gain leverage in the divorce proceedings.
27. Call the police only when necessary.
28. Do not make *false* allegations regarding emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse of the children; *false* allegations can never be taken back.
29. Call Children's Protective Services only when necessary.
30. If your spouse/ex-spouse is abusing you and/or your children, seek help immediately.
31. Control your attorney.
32. Compromise.
33. Do not talk about custody with your children.
34. Do not talk about child support with your children.
35. Do not talk about the division of property with your children.
36. If the marital home is being sold as part of the property settlement, do not have the children present when such home is being shown to potential buyers.
37. Do not talk about spousal support with your children.
38. If you are entitled to spousal support, do not turn it down out of pride, accept it, save it, and utilize it to assist your children with college and other expenses.
39. Do not discuss the court proceedings and rulings with your children.
40. Discuss parenting time with your children only when both parents are present.
41. The Judgment of Divorce should contain a detailed parenting time schedule instead of leaving it open; you and your ex-spouse can always deviate from the schedule if you are communicating; it avoids the necessity of having to return to court if you and your ex-spouse stop communicating.
42. Do not agree to a parenting time schedule that separates the children.
43. Parenting time should be exercised on a consistent basis, without long gaps between visits with your children. Show up, and do not be late, for all scheduled parenting time.
44. If you cannot see your children on a consistent basis, you should telephone, write, e-mail, send cards, etc., on a consistent basis.
45. Do not ask your children what your spouse/ex-spouse is doing.
46. Do not ask your children what your spouse/ex-spouse is spending money on.

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47. Do not use your children to forward bills or messages to your spouse/ex-spouse.
48. Do not bring your children to the divorce proceedings unless requested by the court.
49. Do not bring parents and/or other family members to the divorce proceedings.
50. Do not fight for extra parenting time simply to reduce child support.
51. Do not threaten your spouse/ex-spouse that you will stop seeing your children if you have to pay child support and child care expenses.
52. Do not withhold, or attempt to withhold, parenting time as a means to gain leverage in the divorce proceedings, or to hurt your spouse/ex-spouse during or after the divorce.
53. Do not withhold parenting time because child support is late.
54. Do not pass on a better career opportunity to avoid paying higher child support.
55. Child support is for your children, do not agree to take a lesser amount to appease your spouse/ex-spouse, or as a result of pride.
56. If you are experiencing a financial crunch during or after the divorce, do not dwell on it in front of the children; try to obtain a higher paying job, or a second job if necessary.
57. Allow your spouse/ex-spouse or their family members to assist in watching the children while you are at work to reduce child care expenses.
58. Be flexible with your spouse/ex-spouse as far as parenting time; fill-in for each other when necessary; never turn down extra parenting time.
59. As your children become older, realize that parenting time and responsibilities may have to be altered to meet the changing needs and schedules of the children.
60. A shorter distance between your home and your spouse/ex-spouse's home will allow for more flexibility with respect to parenting time; will make it easier for the parents to fill-in for each other; will make it easier for the non-custodial parent to attend the children's school and other functions; etc.
61. Do not make your children feel uncomfortable, when they are leaving your home so your spouse/ex-spouse can exercise parenting time.
62. Do not make your children feel uncomfortable when you are exercising your parenting time and they want to contact (via the phone or e-mail) your spouse/ex-spouse. Do not check the previous call listing on your children's mobile phones to see how many times they contact your spouse/ex-spouse when you are exercising your parenting time.
63. Do not interrupt your children's time with your spouse/ex-spouse by excessively contacting them when they are with your spouse/ex-spouse.
64. Allow your children to express their love for your spouse/ex-spouse in your presence, and allow your children to have photos of your spouse/ex-spouse in their rooms.
65. To the extent you can afford it, have clothes and toiletries for your children at both your homes.
66. Do not send your children to your spouse/ex-spouse's home in tattered clothes.
67. Be civil to your spouse/ex-spouse when he/she is picking up the children to exercise his/her parenting time; do not make your spouse/ex-spouse pick the children up at the curb.
68. Try to develop a degree of trust with your spouse/ex-spouse when it comes to issues surrounding the children.
69. Establish a game plan with your spouse/ex-spouse to solve issues surrounding the children; meet alone, limit the time of the discussion, stick to the issues, do not bring up the past, try to compromise and come to a resolution, etc.
70. If you and your ex-spouse cannot reach an agreement on issues concerning the children after the divorce, consider a counselor, mediator, or parenting-time coordinator who will decide issues after each parent presents their respective views; a counselor, mediator, or parenting-time coordinator will be quicker and cheaper than using the courts.
71. If you utilize a parenting-time coordinator, make sure that the parenting-time coordinator is qualified; make sure he/she has children of his/her own.
72. If you cannot communicate directly with your spouse/ex-spouse regarding divorce issues and/or the children, use e-mail to communicate.
73. Attempt to coordinate the children's routines (activities, homework, curfew, bedtime etc.) with your spouse/ex-spouse while they are with each parent.
74. You and your spouse/ex-spouse should encourage the children to follow the household rules where they are residing.
75. Allow your children to make some decisions with your new home so they feel a part of it; for example, where to place furniture and pictures.
76. Avoid treating your children like a guest in your home; include them in family activities such as making dinner, doing the dishes, cutting the lawn, etc.
77. Avoid structuring every moment of parenting time around an activity or event; a majority of parenting time should involve everyday life.
78. If your children need something during or after the divorce proceedings when you are engaging in parenting time, obtain it for them if possible, and work out the economics with your spouse/ex-spouse at a later time.
79. If your children are sick or injured during your parenting time, contact your spouse/ex-spouse as soon as possible.
80. Do not convey to your children that you are unable to purchase an item because your spouse/ex-spouse is not paying child support or other amounts due.

81. Encourage your children to have a good relationship and spend time with your spouse/ex-spouse.
82. If your children are upset with your spouse/ex-spouse, do your best to calm them down.
83. If your children have a complaint about your spouse/ex-spouse, encourage them to bring it to the attention of your spouse/ex-spouse.
84. Assist your children in buying cards and gifts for your spouse/ex-spouse.
85. Be supportive of the other parent's role; do not criticize his/her career, the location of his/her home, size of his/her home, etc.
86. Honor the agreements you reach with your spouse/ex-spouse regarding divorce issues and/or children issues; placing such agreements in writing will avoid confusion.
87. Pay your child support.
88. Pay your child care expenses.
89. Do not give gifts to your children with restrictions. For example, if you buy your child a bike, do not force your child to keep it at your home if he/she wants to bring it to your spouse/ex-spouse's home.
90. Do not let your differences keep you and your spouse/ex-spouse from both attending special events in your children's lives; graduations, weddings, etc.
91. Coordinate with your spouse/ex-spouse with respect to gift giving for your children's special events.
92. If your spouse/ex-spouse has yearly events that they attend with the children, do your best to plan/alter your parenting time so as to not interfere with such events.
93. Utilize family counseling and individual counseling for your children and yourself.
94. Do not make your divorce a public event; save the "dirt" for discussions with your counselor.
95. Do not talk badly about your spouse/ex-spouse in front of your children.
96. Do not talk badly about your spouse/ex-spouse to family, friends, or third parties.
97. Do not allow your family, friends, or third parties to talk badly about your spouse/ex-spouse in front of your children.
98. Do not shower your children with gifts to win them over; during the divorce proceedings, all gifts should be from both mom and dad.
99. Do not fake an illness, or dramatize a health issue, to obtain your children's attention and/or sympathy.
100. Do not allow the children to play you and your ex-spouse against each other.
101. Try to resolve your differences short of a trial, between yourselves with the assistance of your attorneys, or through the use of an arbitrator, facilitator, or mediator; a trial deepens/hardens anger and resentment.
102. Figure out a way to be friends with your ex-spouse; try to forgive and forget; you will be parents for life.
103. Support and promote your children's relationships with your spouse/ex-spouse's parents (grandparents), brothers (uncles) sisters (aunts), nieces and nephews.
104. Move on with your personal life; do not live in the past.
105. Continue to be an adult and parent after the divorce; there is no need to act like a teenager.
106. Take your time before you introduce a new girlfriend/boyfriend to your children.
107. When you introduce a new girlfriend/boyfriend to your children, inform your spouse/ex-spouse first so your children do not feel caught in the middle; so they do not feel they are hiding something from your spouse/ex-spouse.
108. If your new girlfriend/boyfriend/spouse has children, do not place such children ahead of your own children; emotionally or otherwise.
109. Support your children's relationships with your ex-spouse's new spouse and step-children.
110. Before you remarry, clearly discuss your future spouse's expectations and role with your children; do not allow your future spouse to replace, or attempt to replace, an active and supportive biological parent.
111. Before you remarry, protect your children's inheritance via a will, trust, pre-nuptial agreement, etc.
112. Do not allow your new spouse to take the lead (or be put in the middle) when dealing with your ex-spouse regarding issues that deal with the children.
113. Remember, your children are always watching and listening; set a good example for them.

The author welcomes readers to forward this article to parents involved in divorce proceedings; he also welcomes readers to forward additional tips to his attention so this article can be supplemented based on the experiences of others. ♦

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