

GUIDE TO **Parenting through Divorce**



YOUR TEEN
for parents



How to Get Back On Your Feet Financially After a Divorce

Divorce can be draining on your finances and your emotions, but these tips will help you rebound.

By Wendy Wisner

I was only eight when my parents divorced, but I can still recall my mother's stress and palpable fear. While I didn't consider it then, I can now appreciate how much of my mother's concerns likely stemmed from financial worries she had never previously encountered.

For many women, this may be the first time they are dealing directly with their family's finances. And it can feel entirely overwhelming. Importantly, though, there is a path forward.

Take a Deep Breath

Before you address the practical aspects, "you need to pause and breathe," explains Michelle Taylor of Luma Wealth Advisors, an investment consulting firm that works with women nationwide. As a specialist in provid-

ing financial consulting to divorced women, Taylor understands the unique financial and emotional challenges they face.

In many instances, the working spouse is the one who also took care of the family finances. "For those clients who have never worked outside the home (or haven't been in the workforce for years), it can be very frightening," says Taylor. "They may need to enter the workforce and assume the financial duties for this new life."

Find Your Support Network

Taylor recommends that a divorced woman make it a priority to amass a strong support network. Companies like Luma can connect divorced women with one another to provide much needed emotional support, and they can also provide references

as you put together your post-divorce advisor team, says Taylor.

“Having the right team is vital: a divorce attorney, a CPA who really understands your most recent tax returns and investments, and a financial advisor who can guide you through it all,” Taylor says.

She also recommends that a family member or friend come along to your meetings, so they can help you recall the salient points and digest what was discussed.

Additionally, Taylor recommends seeking professional counseling and perhaps signing up for something like yoga to help you relax and unwind.

“Taking care of yourself means also taking care of your physical and mental wellness,” Taylor says. “If you aren’t doing that it’s very hard to take care of the financial aspect.”

Get Your Budget in Order

After you’ve taken care of your immediate needs (shelter, utilities, etc.), it’s time to create a budget. Start by figuring out which bills you are responsible for, what assets belong to you, and what your income will be moving forward.

“One of the most impactful things we do in the case of divorce is go through a few years of expenses,” says David Rubis, another advisor at Luma. Rubis advises his clients to consider the lifestyle they were accustomed to and to reset expectations because in many cases that lifestyle will change.

“We are here to help them understand the new reality—where it may be wise to make cuts going forward and how to develop a new budget that will work,” says Rubis.

This may mean going line by line through your budget and considering which items are truly necessary. Doing this can certainly be a jarring emotional adjustment. But in the end, getting control of your finances—and coming at them from an informed and realistic point-of-view—can be empowering and will ultimately offer you the best quality of life.

Looking to the Future and Learning to Put Yourself First

Once you start adjusting to your new financial situation, you can think about the bigger picture, says Rubis.

“First, it’s always best to have an emergency fund built up for yourself,” Rubis explains. “After that, take advantage of your employer’s retirement plan. Once that’s considered, any additional funds can be available for college savings.”

Many mothers are surprised to learn that saving for college isn’t as much of a priority as saving for retirement. However, you can take out a loan for college; you can’t do that for retirement, Taylor explains.

Taking care of your own needs isn’t selfish. “After divorce, women will feel guilt,” Taylor says. “But when they do right for themselves first, the rest will fall into place.”

Finalize Your Plan

Above all else, says Taylor, recently divorced women need a concrete plan to get through this difficult time. Once you’ve combed through your budget and assessed all your finances, your financial advisor will help you finalize your financial plan—and doing so will provide you with some peace of mind.

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I Survived a Divorce

Here's What You Need to Know

By *Katie Bingham-Smith*

Divorce is like raising kids: I thought I would know how to react—but I didn't. And I learned that's okay. I couldn't possibly know how something was going to feel until I went through it.

On top of that, I was trying to navigate my way through end-

ing my marriage while rearing teenagers. And they were very aware of what was going on, which added another complex layer on top of an already stressful situation.

When it first happened, I wanted to hide my emotions from my kids to spare them any additional pain. But that

was wrong. They needed to see me as a human being who was going through a hard time. I found my kids responded better when I admitted I was struggling and having a rough day as opposed to when I tried to pretend nothing was wrong, desperately trying to hold it all together. Believe me, I tried it both ways.

Here are 11 things I learned during my divorce:

1. Teens sense the moods of their parents. Being honest about how I was feeling and putting their emotional needs before any animosity I had towards my ex-husband was helpful during our divorce. We adjusted better to our new life—and the fact their father was no longer living with us—when I stopped trying to paint such a rosy picture for them.

2. Give your teenagers some control. Instead of creating a hard and fast custody schedule, we've tried to be flexible. My ex-husband and I let our kids decide which house they want to stay at on some nights, and it's provided some semblance of control to our teens—but they also understand that we have the last word. It's difficult, but it's important not to take these decisions by your children personally. They just want some say in their life that has been turned upside down.

3. You can't always anticipate what will bring you to tears. One thing I wish I'd known going into a divorce: There are some things you thought would be a breeze that can bring you to your knees and make you question everything. For example, I thought grocery shopping for one less person would be easier, but then the woman behind the meat counter commented on how I never buy steak anymore, and I didn't make it to the parking lot before the tears started to flow. My kids saw it all. We talked about it, and we all felt better.

4. It's an emotional roller coaster. Don't expect to settle into your new normal overnight. The feelings your family will have regarding divorce are not lateral. They will move up and down, and that in no way means you are failing.

5. You will feel scared. Your life will feel out of control for a while, and you will be scared about what comes next. You will feel unsettled, and you will wonder how your family will get through this difficult time. Just don't let these feelings consume you, and don't be hesitant to seek professional counseling.

6. Some dreaded tasks have silver linings. On the flip side, there will be things you will dread; tasks you will question whether you can manage on your own. Sometimes, these turn into extraordinary moments of growth and pride. You—and your teens—are up to the challenge. My son now loves mowing the lawn and snowplowing, a job once reserved for his dad. It makes him feel good, and I always tell him how happy I am to have his help.

7. You'll find a new normal. While it's scary being a single parent, responsible for paying the bills, making all the appointments, and harboring the bulk of the financial worries, you eventually find a routine and process that works for your family.

8. Share some of the worry. While your first instinct will be to protect your teens from any worry, it is okay to share your concerns about issues such as a leaky roof or saving for college without burdening them. It helps teens understand the value of goods and services and can help bring you closer together.

9. Be kind to yourself. The most important thing to remember when you are going through a divorce is to be gentle with yourself. You are going to forget things, break down in front of your kids, and miss your old life. This does not make you a failure; it means you're human. Just permit yourself to fall apart once in a while, and know it doesn't mean you're failing. When you have kids, the divorce doesn't end when you sign on the dotted line.

10. Dating will be difficult. You are going to stumble when you tell your kids you are dating again. You will flop into bed some nights and wonder how you are going to find your way tomorrow. You are going to question every decision and you will feel awkward. Be open and honest as teens always know more than we think.

11. Learn to be happy again. Do what you can to make yourself happy. When your kids see you are comfortable with where you are at in life, they can be happy, too.

Co-Parenting is Stressful, But Keep it Professional

By Bonnie Jean Feldkamp

Divorce is hard on all involved, but how you co-parent through divorce matters most to your teen. This is where they feel the most impact.

Teens tend to respond to the news of a divorce in anger and are vocal about how they feel. Sharon James, Parent Coach for Beech Acres Parenting Center in Cincinnati, Ohio says, “They want information—and they’ll demand to know why.”

James warns, “Don’t answer the intimate questions and don’t bash the other parent.” Logistical information is important for teens. They’ll want to know where they will live and if their school routine will change. But don’t give adult information like “Dad is having an affair.” That’s not their business. Adolescents need support and security, not more drama.



Divorced Parents Have a Business Relationship

Helen Duncan Gavin, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and mental health therapist at Mebs and Associates, LLC in Covington, KY reminds parents that when you divorce, you enter into a business relationship with the other parent. You're together in the business of raising a child.

In conversation, "talk about the business at hand," she says. When negotiating for birthdays or holiday time and when voicing expectations and rules, "work within the realm of that business," she says. "Don't bring up the past." That's not appropriate in a professional setting. If parents use professionalism as a guiding philosophy, communication won't get out of hand. Conversation revolves around the needs of your teen.

What to do When Bashing Happens

If a parent feels they were jilted, they may want the kids "on their side." This is when bashing happens. James says, "You're trying to alienate your kid and that's not okay." Do not expose your child to toxic feelings.

If bashing comes from the other parent, don't get defensive or retaliate. James suggests that you "reframe the negativity and help your teen cope." Be empathetic to what your teen must be feeling. Say something like, "It's really hard to hear bad things about someone you care about, huh?" James stresses that your teen doesn't need to hear your opinion of it. Even if they ask, "But Mom, doesn't that make you mad?" Reply with something like, "Everyone has a right to their own perspective."

In the face of conflict and contempt, your teen may wonder whom to trust. Keep yourself in check. Vent to a friend, not to your teen. Teens are smart and will see for themselves what's happening. You don't have to

say a word about the other parent. Trust your kid to figure it out while you focus on being the parent who supports them, loves them, and most importantly, makes it okay for them to love both parents.

Older kids mourn the divorce just as deeply as younger ones. Even if they say things out of anger, don't take their flippant attitude as your "in" to jump on the bashing bandwagon. Instead, give them the space and emotional support to mourn the divorce without adding your bitterness on top of their grief.

Berating your teen's other parent offers no benefit. Do you think they don't already know the shortcomings of their own parents? It will only make them feel defensive. Plus, if shortcomings go unnoticed, is that really a bad thing?

"Get your ego out of it," stresses Gavin. "Your ego has no place in this business relationship."

Gavin also reminds us, "Your ex is someone you chose to have kids with. This is your partner in parenting, not a stranger off the street." This person should be a part of important decisions and activities for your teen.

Finally, remember that "developmentally, teens are going through more changes than at any time in their lives," stresses James. They're focusing on friendship, sorting out their identity, and moving towards adulthood. "It is important they have both parents involved so they can focus on the business of being a teen and not on their parent's relationship and how to fix or maneuver their conflict," she says.

"The research is clear," states James. "Both parents contribute to this healthy development of self."



How Divorce Can Affect Your Teen:

What to Expect, and Ways to Help Them Cope

By Jennifer Arnold

In the United States, roughly 40 to 50 percent of marriages will end in divorce. It is a harsh reality of our culture, and no one seems to be immune. While it might be the best decision in the long run for most troubled marriages, the repercussions can be severe, especially for the children. Everyone reacts differently to divorce, but experts have noted that the impact on teenagers can be especially hard.

Many parents assume that because teenagers are older, they can handle and cope with the situation better than a younger child, but that is not always the case. “Teenagers are already a bundle of raw emotions and a shift in family dynamics can often bring out the worst in teens,” explains Raysha Clark, founder of the Collective, a multifaceted career and therapeutic counseling agency in Little Rock, AR.

Parents may see a range of emotions from their adolescents, the most common being shock, anger, resentment, fear, sadness, guilt, and anxiety. “Parents can expect teens to view them as the leading source of suck in their lives,” says Clark. “Parents should expect aggressive and hostile conversations or obvious attempts to avoid talking at all.”

Julie Bowen, MSW, and Psychotherapist at the Hope Therapy and Wellness Center in Virginia, urges parents not to dismiss their teenager’s emotions. She states, “All emotions are valid, and this will be a time when validation for these emotions is crucial.”

Some teenagers may show no outward indications of distress. While younger children may show obvious signs such as regression, teenagers may attempt to keep their feelings hidden in an effort to be stoic. Some may be afraid of adding to the stress of the divorce or angering their parents, and many will repress emotions because they do not know how to verbalize their feelings.

To help their teenagers cope, according to Clark, parents should “prepare themselves for the onset of unusual behaviors that

are bound to occur within the home. Teens are dealing with so many weird emotions and feelings that occur in typical growth and development, and parents need to accept that the news of divorce is going to add to their teen’s emotional plate.”

“Parents should try and encourage conversation with their teenagers about their thoughts and emotions regarding the divorce,” states Bowen. “Even if the divorce isn’t a surprise, it is still a traumatizing experience.” In many cases, therapy can be a beneficial option for teens. Clark recommends group therapy in particular, because “a good teen group led by a therapist that understands teens can be a game changer.”

Some teenagers may become depressed, and try to deal with their emotions with self-destructive behaviors such as alcohol and substance abuse or self-harm. They may isolate and pull away from friends and family, begin suffering academically, or become truant. Parents who see any of these red flags may consider asking their child’s pediatrician for a mental health referral.

In the instance of a contentious relationship, it is important for parents to be mindful of talking badly about each other in front of their children. “It is not appropriate to talk negatively about a parent no matter how old the child,” emphasizes Bowen. Parents also need to avoid using their teen as a confidant. An older teen may seem mature enough to listen to your problems, but it is better to find a trusted friend or a therapist if you need to vent.

Parents also need to remember that consistency, predictability, and dependability are crucial for teens who are trying to process a divorce. Keeping regular schedules, routines, and rules will provide them with a much-needed sense of stability. Some parents may be tempted to “go easy” on their kids to soften the blow, but this can do more harm than good.

There is no easy way to navigate a divorce, but providing a consistent, respectful, empathetic environment can go a long way in helping your teen transition and cope during this challenging time.

Want to Get Through Your Divorce? Try Some Self-Care



By Katie Bingham Smith

There is nothing like a major life change to throw you off the rails, take you out of your routine, and cause you to neglect your own needs. Divorce is one of those big life changes.

You may feel sad and disappointed, perhaps even betrayed and hopeless. The weight of these feelings can cause many to push their physical and mental well-being to the side. If there are children involved, the worry and stress about their wellness can leave a parent drained.

But we all know that if you don't put the proper effort into taking care of yourself, there is nothing left for anyone else.

Women need to understand that taking care of yourself should never be viewed as being selfish, says Nicole Iannelli, a licensed mental health counselor and owner of Ocean State Mental Health. "Self-care is invaluable when navigating such an emotional transition," she says.

Divorce can compromise a woman's health very quickly and can lead to "exhaustion, anxiety, digestive issues, aches and pains, headaches, and a variety of other issues," Iannelli says.

During a divorce, women have so much on their mind that they can become forgetful, lose focus, and get easily distracted. These



side effects can “interfere with everyday functioning.” The burden of raising children along with new financial and emotional complications that come with a divorce can knock anyone down.

Women need to focus on themselves during this period to “become stronger—emotionally and physically—in order to get through the situation in the best way possible,” Iannelli says. Here are six ways you can focus on self-care during a divorce:

1. Start with the basics. There are some key actions that everyone should practice during periods of stress, including eating right, exercising regularly, and ensuring you get plenty of sleep. These are vital to keeping you in a good emotional state and should be at the top of your self-care list.

2. Find Your happy place. Self-care is not one size fits all. It’s important to find specific activities that you enjoy and make you feel better.

3. Get social. Maintaining supportive relationships is invaluable during a divorce. Even if you don’t typically enjoy social outings, “Having a social world balances your mind and spirit,” states Iannelli. If you don’t feel like going out, try to force yourself for a set amount of time, such as 30 minutes.

4. Challenge Yourself. Milana Perepyolkina, bestselling author of *Gypsy Energy Secrets: Turning a Bad into a Good Day No Matter What Life Throws at You*, explains that trying new activities and

creating personal challenges can keep you “fresh and engaged.” While divorce may be the end of your marriage, it’s also a time for a fresh start. Perhaps you’ve always wanted to try belly dancing or hot yoga—now is the time. New makeup or a new haircut can also boost your mood.

5. Make a list—and check it often. Create a long list of things that make you happy, recommends Perepyolkina, and put it in a visible place—such as on your refrigerator or on your beside table—as a reminder to spend time with the people or on doing activities on the list.

6. Let it go. Perhaps most important—and hardest to achieve—is recognizing that you can’t move forward and be content if you are “nursing your pain, holding grudges, playing the victim, or constantly finding fault with your ex-husband,” Perepyolkina says. While temporarily focusing on the negative is normal and natural, don’t stay in this space for too long. Seeking professional help is a form of self-care that can help you process the feelings associated with divorce.

When we realize we can make positive changes in our lives, even if they take time, that is when the magic begins. Taking care of yourself through such a life-changing event is crucial to your happiness and those around you.

And we all deserve a little more happiness.



Divorce in the Sandwich Generation

As if divorce isn't hard enough, some women are members of the sandwich generation: having the responsibility of raising children while also taking care of an aging family member. While it may seem impossible to practice self-care if you are in this situation, there are steps you can take to give yourself more time to focus on your needs. Jennifer L. FitzPatrick, LCSW, author of *Cruising Through Caregiving: Reducing The Stress of Caring For Your Older Loved One*, shares some helpful tips about how to get through this difficult time.

TAKE HELP

With so much on your plate, it's important to realize you can't—or shouldn't—do it by yourself. When people offer to help, "Let them know specifically what they can do—and if there is anything more they can help with in the caregiving," says FitzPatrick. "A good example might be to ask your sister to start taking Mom to her doctors' appointments, or switching off weekly, instead of only you."

SET BOUNDARIES

This is vital to your healing. It's more than okay to let your loved one know you may be taking a step back and no longer visiting them daily anymore," says FitzPatrick. She continues: "Look at services, such as hiring a temporary home care aide, that could augment your time," she says.

USE ALTERNATIVE CARE OPTIONS

If your elder relative has a disease such as Alzheimer's or needs a lot of physical assistance, it may be time to consider a move to senior living—especially if your ex-spouse was helping out previously. While this may be hard for you to consider and a big adjustment for your relative, you should not feel guilty. It's important to remember you can't properly take care of them if you are spread too thin. Sharing the emotional and physical labor with someone else—be it another family member, or professional—will benefit everyone.

Advocating for Yourself During a Divorce

3 Tips from a Divorce Attorney By Sarah Lindenfeld Hall

When new clients meet with divorce lawyer Kyleigh A. Weinfurtner, they're likely cycling through one of the emotional stages of divorce. In the beginning, it's often sadness and anger. By the end, they often push forward with a business-like, "let's be done with this," approach. Divorce is a marathon, however, not a sprint. As the saying goes, "Divorce only moves as fast as the slowest person."

"My tagline is, 'We're working towards your new normal,'" says Weinfurtner of Ohio-based Zashin & Rich. To get to that point, Weinfurtner suggests a few tips on how women can advocate for their best interests during a divorce.

Get support

During a divorce, women have a lot to process—emotionally, financially and logistically—and they have some huge decisions to make. Weinfurtner suggests women utilize a therapist or counselor experienced in handling divorce matters to work through their emotions, so that they can think more clearly and make more rational decisions. "It's best to unravel those feelings with a counselor and solid support network, not your divorce lawyer," Weinfurtner says.

But Weinfurtner's recommendation also has a practical side: Talking with a counselor cuts costs—and getting a divorce isn't cheap.

"A lot of times people will use their domestic relations lawyer as their sounding board, which we can be, but that's very expensive," Weinfurtner explains. "There are a lot of emotions rolling around—you want to cry and scream—but you're playing me out of position by using me as a therapist rather than a trained mental health professional."

Focus on life post-divorce

Many women lose sight of the long view when they focus on the immediate "wins" in a divorce settlement, Weinfurtner says. She regularly reminds her clients of this: "There's a life after divorce. What do you want that to look like for you?"

Getting the family home, for instance, might mean you won't have to uproot your kids now. But that home, affordable for a married couple, may be too expensive for a single parent.

"If you want 70 percent of your income going to your house, maybe that makes sense to you," she said. "If you don't, we need to think of a different strategy."

This long-term approach applies to more than just the spoils of marriage, but also to relationships. Is it worth fighting for half of your ex-husband's business, for instance, or is it better to walk away to maintain a civil relationship with him for the kids? The answer depends on each woman's specific situation, she states.

Expect to hate your lawyer—sometimes

As a neutral third party, a divorce attorney can keep the process moving forward. They can dive into the details, ferreting out critical information about a couple's finances and assets. And occasionally, they'll give advice that's hard to hear.

Listen to your lawyers.

"I'm not here to tell clients that they are right," Weinfurtner says. "I'm here to give advice. Sometimes you're going to hate me because you don't like what I'm telling you. But that's my job."

But her job also includes a bit of cheerleading. She regularly gives pep talks to her clients too.

"It may very well suck, but you will get through it," Weinfurtner tells her clients. "There is a light at the end of the tunnel."



Women, Divorce, and Money:

Top Tips from
a CPA

By Sarah Lindenfeld Hall

Divorces are not only emotionally draining, but financially challenging as well. When a marriage ends, it can send a woman's finances into a tailspin.

Already earning less than men and more likely to leave the workforce to care for children or aging parents, when they divorce, a woman's household income plummets twice as much as men's, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

With careful planning, however, it doesn't have to be all bad news, said Naomi Ganoe, a certified public accountant and managing director at CBIZ in northeast Ohio. And she should know—Ganoe is divorced.

“There are lots of feelings and realities that have to be worked through,” she says. “Just take one at a time.”

Here are four ways women can protect themselves financially during a divorce.

Get the Right Team in Place

That includes a lawyer who specializes in divorce and a CPA who understands its nuances. “You want all of your professional advisors to be able to deal with the different things that come up with divorce,” Ganoë said.

As the lawyer handles the legal aspects, CPAs can take a comprehensive look at a couple’s finances and provide critical information about the long-term tax implications, such as keeping one asset over another. The CPA can serve as an ongoing advisor on your team, in addition to considering an asset management company to diversify your portfolio and financial life plan.

“Often, if you’ve never had to deal with the finances, it doesn’t end when the divorce is over,” she said. “It just begins.”

Create a Budget

“Everything has changed,” Ganoë said. “You can’t keep spending the way you spent before.”

In other words, it’s time to create a budget. Some expenses, such as mortgage payments and food costs, are obvious. Others might not be top of mind, such as children’s activities or even cell phone plans, and may not be discussed during divorce negotiations.

Ganoë recommends taking a two-year look back at spending to ensure every expense is counted. Moving forward, she advises women keep a journal to record their spending.

Negotiate for the Assets You Really Need

For some women, taking possession of the family home is the goal. For others, it might be retirement savings. Both come with advantages and disadvantages.

A home requires regular mortgage payments, upkeep and property taxes, but provides familiar comfort for children. A retirement fund, however, won’t carry any tax implications

until it’s time to withdraw the money.

“Are they taking less [retirement] to get the house?” asks Ganoë. “Does that make sense for the long term? Put some thought behind what asset you would like to acquire.”

Set Financial Goals

In the middle of an emotional divorce, it can be difficult to focus on the future, but that’s exactly what women need to do, Ganoë explains. She tells women to write down their financial goals for today and then five and ten years from now.

Consider retirement plans and children’s college funds too, though Ganoë recommends making retirement a priority. “If it ends up being that tight, take loans out for college,” she says.

But, whatever you do, it needs to include a plan. “If you don’t set your goal, you won’t achieve it,” she says. “If you understand where you want to go financially, you’ll have something to work toward.”

Parenting Teens and Tweens Through Divorce

By Estelle Erasmus

Divorce is hard on all involved, but how you co-parent through divorce matters most to your teen. This is where they feel the most impact.

In a recent episode of *Real Housewives of Orange County*, Kelly Dodd, who is divorcing her husband, cries to her daughter over not only her ex—her teen’s father— but her dating woes.

Big mistake.

“It’s never a good idea to turn your child into a confidant,” says Rosalind Sedacca, a divorce and co-parenting coach, and founder of The Child-Centered Divorce Network.

“As soon as an adult confides in their teen, you rob them of their childhood because you are putting them in an adult conversation that they are not prepared for emotionally or psychologically. They may then start to think about needing to protect a parent or taking sides, but they are trying to fix a situation which is out of their control and that can create a lot of stress.”

The key to managing the chaos of divorce for tweens and teens is to try to keep as much stability in their lives as possible, Sedacca says.



That means trying to keep them in the same schools with the same activities. And, helping them see their cousins or grandparents. She also suggests keeping traditions intact, like Christmas and birthdays so they don't feel punished for your divorce.

Your tweens and teens will likely be angry. It's important to listen and show empathy, but also convey they are not responsible for fixing the situation or in charge of making decisions about with whom and where they live. In fact, asking who would you rather live with is a no-win situation, according to Sedacca.

What to Say

You might know **what not to say**, like messages that bash your spouse. But knowing **what to say** can be even harder. Here are some suggestions from Sedacca.

"We are working everything out for our divorce. We don't have all the details yet, but we'll let you know. We don't want you to worry, or feel burdened. We will take care of it."

"I understand what you are saying. I know why you are so angry with mom (or dad). We are going to be working together and with our attorney on this and will revisit it again."

"We have discussed the issues, and taken your feelings into consideration, but for now we've decided to do..."

Avoiding a Teenage Power Play

Teens can try to play one parent against the other. They may side with one parent and reject the other parent who they consider to be less powerful. They can threaten: "I'm going to tell dad you were flirting with the cable guy, if you don't buy me a car." Or, "I don't like what you did, so I'm not taking care of my younger brother."

The more parents agree about family rules and discipline, bedtime, chores, and homework, the easier it will be for children to comply, accept, and move forward with the transitions of divorce says Sedacca.

Watch for Changes

Divorce can be hard on teens. Some teens get depressed, have nightmares, misbehave in school, resort to drugs, or bully others. If a parent sees any changes in behavior, they should connect with a coach or therapist as soon as possible.

Ask Yourself 3 Questions

It's easy for parents to lose perspective during a divorce. To stay grounded and focused, they should ask themselves these three questions regularly:

1) **Do I love my children more than I may hate or dislike my ex?** The answer should be yes. If you aren't clear that you love your kids more, you may end up making decisions that will leave scars with your children.

2) **Would I be making these same parenting decisions if we were still married?** Let's say your ex wants to continue to take your teen on an annual fishing trip. If you fight it, then you are more focused on hurting your ex than helping your child.

3) **What will my tween or teen say about our divorce when they are an adult?** If you know that you will be held accountable for your actions and words, you are more likely to make decisions for the right reasons.

"Divorce doesn't scar children," says Sedacca. "It's how parents approach or handle the divorce that does the damage—not the divorce itself."

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for parents

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