

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC
Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Ten Guidelines for Handling Divorce

When parents divorce, they may notice many problems with their children - defensiveness about touch, mood swings, problems in school, laziness, youngsters reverting to wetting their pants, hyperactivity in grade school children and back talk from teens.

Such behavior is often part of the normal grieving process and can be alleviated by following a few guidelines for divorced or divorcing parents:

Guideline 1:

Expect children to handle the divorce as well as it is handled by the adults. Children follow our cues. If we're angry, they are. If we communicate, they do.

Guideline 2:

Let the child know that the divorce is NOT the child's fault. A parent can say, "Michael, Dad and I decided we can't get along. We both still love you!"

Guideline 3:

Be honest about your feelings. Parents need to tell their children, without details, how they feel about their ex-spouse and why. For example, "Dad and I had trouble agreeing on how we wanted to live in our marriage. I wanted him to be around a lot more, and he felt I limited his freedom." Notice it helps to provide the other parent's point of view.

Children can be expected to handle a divorce only as well as their parents do

Guideline 4:

Understand why the child's acting out, but give consequences. Parents need to encourage the child to express his/her feelings. If the parent lets the child be disrespectful, the child feels the adult is at fault and also feels guilty for misbehaving.

Guideline 5:

Give the child someone outside the family to talk with, such as a school counselor, teacher, peer group, or family friend.

Guideline 6:

Post-divorce counseling may help. When communication is poor after the divorce, counseling almost always helps, as long as both adults want to be civil.

Guideline 7:

Remain available to the child without prying.

Guideline 8:

Handle issues around visitation directly with your ex-spouse - not through your child.

Guideline 9:

Children need "moms" and "dads." Encourage children to call step-parents "Mom" and "Dad." They won't forget their "real" parent.

Guideline 10:

Parents must back the stepparent to the hilt on discipline.