



## Divorce

With one out of every two marriages today ending in divorce, there are many children facing this incredibly difficult situation. Parental experiences range of a sense of relief to extreme devastation, but most struggle with the associated legal proceedings, transitions, and loss of time with their child(ren). Most parents who are getting a divorce are frequently worried about the effect the divorce will have on their children. And, paramount to how a child copes with the situation is how the parents are doing personally and how they manage the divorce with the child. With thoughtful attention and sensitivity, a family's strengths can be mobilized and in turn children can learn how to deal constructively with parental conflict and the myriad of changes that come from divorce.

Knowing what and how to talk with your child about divorce is challenging for most parents. These are difficult and stressful conversations, regardless of how they're done. The following are tips for making it less so:

- Talk with your child about the divorce in a simple, direct way
- Keep communication lines open and let your child lead the way
- Provide reassurance that the divorce is not their fault
- Acknowledge the reality that that this will be sad and upsetting for everyone
- Emphasize that regardless of changing circumstances, your/your former spouses' feelings remain unchanged toward them
- Although tempting, avoid placing blame on the other parents and/or speaking negatively about them
- Keep the child as the focus of decision-making around living arrangements, while avoiding expectations the child "choose"
- Learn ways to maintain communication within and between family members, including and especially between parents

Parents should be alert to signs of distress in their child or children. Young children may react to divorce by becoming more aggressive and uncooperative or by withdrawing. Older children may feel deep sadness and loss. Their schoolwork may suffer and behavior problems are common. As teenagers and adults, children of divorce can have trouble with their own relationships and experience problems with self-esteem.

Please feel free to contact the LBP team if your family is facing a divorce or if you have concerns about how your child is coping with parents divorce.