

Summertime Sadness

As children transition between their two homes over the summer, you might notice moments of sadness. It's important for families of divorce to remember that summer parenting plans vastly differ from the school year schedule. Routines foster predictability, which breeds comfort, leaving change to be scary. Summer parenting plans leave children saying good-bye to a parent for unusually longer periods, both ways. Also, spending longer periods of time with a parent, while exciting, can also be an unsettling reminder that their parents are divorced. Mom, Dad, you are the two people that your children love more than anyone. It's not easy to be away from either of you. Therefore, here are 3 tips to help your children work through some of their summertime sadness that may result from transitioning between their homes:

1. Encourage continuity of relationships. The parent that has the children, "happily" encourage the children to call the other parent daily. This allows the children to experience continuity of the parent-child relationship. Also, children will be assured that you approve of their relationship with the other parent. A long-term side-effect, is teaching them to have continued communication for when you launch them to adulthood!

2. Have thick skin. Keep in mind that your child doesn't have a goal to hurt you, they are merely trying to work through their own hurt. Because children can't articulate their troubled emotions, they express them using negative behaviors. Often times, children haven't developed the vocabulary to help them explain their hurt that resonates from living between two homes.

3. Avoid asking excessive questions. Information seeking often feels like an interrogation. While it is common practice to ask your child questions about their daily events, when children sense any negativity among the coparent relationship, they have a desire to protect their parents' emotions. There is a tendency to shield the parent asking questions from possibly feeling sad, left-out, or rejected. They also protect the other parent if there is the slightest inclination that anyone could get in trouble.

When you are divorced, keep your child's well-being as your focus. Remember that they need both of you. When making decisions, consider what the benefits would be for your child and what it might be like for your child to experience whatever it is you are contemplating. The best gift parents can give their children, after a divorce, is a friendly coparenting relationship. Teach them how to find peace and resolution after troubled times; how to find happiness after disparity. When children are raised under one roof, there is never a day that will pass that they are court ordered to be away from a parent; as they can freely, without gaining permission, engage with either parent at will. Parents are the two most important people in helping children work through the flood of broken emotions that follow divorce. Summertime is a perfect opportunity for your child to enjoy the love and support of their family, even when they have to transition between homes. Give them extra love, hugs, and kisses as you promote healthy relationships with all of their family members.

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