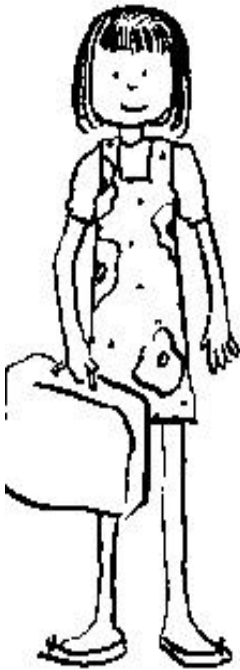




Supportive Ideas for Raising Children In Two Homes

Sharing the care of your child with the other parent is often a challenge.

The following is a list of guidelines that may help you to look at the situation from your child's viewpoint, thus encouraging smooth transitions and clearer communication.



Recognize the importance of the other parent in your child's life.

Appreciate your child's need to love both parents. Speak positively of the other parent in front of your child. If your views differ from those of the other parent, discuss your differences in the absence of your child. Let your child know that they can count on you.

Acknowledge your child's feelings. Consider your child's point of view and feelings. Provide a listening ear and respond non-judgmentally. If your child experiences discomfort, always acknowledge their feelings as OK.

If visits to the other parent are irregular, help your child prepare by talking in advance. Provide your child with a transitional object, such as a stuffed animal that may comfort and remind your child of home. Give your child the telephone number where you can be reached and invite them to call.

Help to ease the transition from one parent to the other for yourself and your child. If necessary, arrange for a neutral pick-up and drop-off site. Some parents find it easier to have someone else meet the other parent with your child than to go there directly. Be willing to discuss any problems arising during the transition.

Allow time for adjusting. Recognize your child may need time to adjust upon arrival at each home. Your child will likely communicate his / her comfort level through behavior.

When your child returns home, they may need time to talk about the time shared with the other parent. If so, just listen. Avoid criticizing the other parent.

Avoid having your child communicate to the other parent for you. If you're uncomfortable communicating yourself, seek the assistance of a friend or professional.

As your child grows, their needs change. Be flexible. Time becomes filled with friends and activities. Both parents need to accept the child's changing needs.

From Preschool Support Services, Notre Dame of St. Agatha, Reprinted by Family Service Canada





Helping children cope with Separation or Divorce

A separation or divorce is a time of change and adjustment for both parents and children. Your child may respond in ways that you hadn't expected or that may appear to be unrelated to the family change. Your child may also challenge the limits of family rules and test you. Be firm, consistent and fair as best you can.

The following are general guidelines that may be useful to you in helping your child cope:

Be aware of the changes in your child's life over which they have no control. Try to understand your child's perspective, including your child's feelings.

It takes time to adjust as a new family unit. It's a new experience for everyone.

Accept sadness and feelings of missing the other parent. Allow your child to express their feelings without feeling guilty or ashamed.

It is normal for children to go through a grieving process after their parents separate or divorce. Be patient and answer your child's questions honestly and carefully. Assure your child that he / she is not responsible for the separation or divorce.

Remain consistent in guiding your child's behavior, using positive discipline and following through with expectations and consequences. As this may be a difficult time, your child may challenge the limits and test you. Be firm and consistent.

Plan time for just being together and enjoying the company of your children. Nurture each other with closeness and sharing of a special food, book, activity or outing.

Reassure your child of your permanence in their life. Your child may fear that you too will move to another home. Answer your child's questions as best you can.

From Preschool Support Services, Notre Dame of St. Agatha, Reprinted by Family Service Canada



Community