

# Helping kids through Divorce

“Parents who work together for the children’s sake during a separation make it easier for them to adjust”. Divorce can have a similar impact on a child as a death in the family, in terms of feelings of loss. The fact the absent parent is “out there somewhere” and “not here with me” presents a complex sense of mourning for many kids.

For parents, it’s equally difficult to juggle their own hurt feelings and confusion while making practical and important decisions which affect the future of their family.

But it’s vital to remember that children need the love and support of both parents during a separation. The Australian government has recognised this with its recent controversial incentive for fathers to pat less child support if they spend a day a week with their kids.

Meanwhile, UK studies have shown that “divorce orphans” who no longer see their fathers have greater emotional problems than children caught in the angriest of marriage crossfires.

This means parents must make a shift – from being partners to being parenting partners.

Children will adjust more quickly when their parents are sensitive to their needs and make every effort to share responsibilities.

## Where to start

Florence Bienenfeld, author of *Helping Your Child Succeed After Divorce*, says while divorce is often stressful for kids, it doesn’t have to be.

“After separation or divorce, couples feel as if they are drowning,” she says. “They feel insecure, and this is when their kids need them most.”

To help children through, she advises that parents

1. **PROTECT** children from arguments. “If discussions are going to make you angry, have them away from the kids. Avoid making derogatory statements about an ex in front of the children.”
2. **BOTH BE INVOLVED** in the children’s lives. “Kids are not possessions, and it isn’t winner takes all. Litigation should be the last resort. Research shows children who do best are involved with both parents.”

**New Idea.**