



Arizona Superior Court Yavapai County

**120 S. Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86303**

**2840 N. Commonwealth Drive
Camp Verde, AZ 86322**

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Part

A

**YAVAPAI COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Factors that Determine the Post-Divorce Adjustment of Children

1) Quality of Parenting

- a. This is often impacted by the process of grief associated with the divorce. Five stages of grief: denial, anger, depression, transition and acceptance. Both parents and children experience a grief process in divorce. Grief is an individual process and **ALL** individuals will go through these states at their own pace.
- b. The grief process tends to be a cycle – you go through all of the stages more than once before arriving at long-term acceptance. The average length of this process in divorce is two years for adults and three years for children.

2) Degree of Exposure to Parental Conflict

- a. Conflict occurs on a continuum and all relationships involved some degree of conflict – it is inevitable. Children however are negatively impacted by seeing, hearing or otherwise experiencing parental conflict. Children who experience long-term domestic violence are the most severely impacted.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FOR CO-PARENTING

- I. State the problem, not the solution.
- II. Business meetings
 - a. Agenda – one issue; start with the one you think you can solve!
 - b. Mutually convenient neutral location
- III. Figure out your emotional baggage
 - a. Through bubble OR
 - b. Any written technique
- IV. Use “I” messages – I feel _____ when _____.

COMPROMISE

- V. Use Paraphrasing – repeat back what you thought you heard the other parent say and agree to.

3) Support Systems, People, Activities, Organizations

4) Pre-Divorce Level of Adjustment of Individual Child

5) Post-Divorce Level of Adjustment of the Parent(s)

6) Placement

GUIDING THOUGHTS

Divorce has a devastating effect on children, but it does not have to ruin their entire lives.

Picture your child's high school graduation, or their wedding, or the birth of your first grandchild. How do you want your children to feel on those very special days of their lives? Do you want them to feel love and respect for you and for themselves? Or do you want them to feel confused and bitter because that's what they have seen in their parents?

The decision is in your hands. Though the parents are divorcing each other, they are not divorcing the children. The children need to know that they will be loved and not abandoned.

The greatest gift you can give your child is the right to love the other parent. When you do that, you open a door in your child's heart that will never be closed. Think how good you will feel when your child grows up and says, "even though you and Mom (or Dad) were divorced, I still had a happy childhood."

OUR GREATEST EFFORTS SHOULD BE INVESTED IN OUR CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR FUTURE.

GIVE YOUR CHILDREN THE RIGHT AND PRIVILEGE TO LOVE BOTH THEIR PARENTS. THEY NEED YOU BOTH AND THEY WANT YOU BOTH. LET THEM HAVE YOU.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING THE ADEQUACY OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

The following are guidelines which can be used for determining whether the parent-child interaction is adequate to promote the child's growth and development.

1. The parent's expectations of the child are age-appropriate and reasonable.
2. The parent enjoys the child and takes pleasure in the child's age-appropriate behaviors.
3. The parent is able to tolerate and understand the child's negative behavior. This parental ability is necessary since all children will be provocative, misbehave and test their parents.
4. The parent can shift from viewing the child primarily as a need-satisfying object to seeing the child as an individual. This involves respect and empathy for the individuality of the child rather than viewing the child as an extension of one's self.
5. The parent allows the child to have meaningful and gratifying relationships outside of the nuclear family.
6. The parent expresses affection towards the child, verbally and physically. This may take the form of age-appropriate praise, reinforcement or physical cuddling.

HEALTHY WAYS OF COPING WITH TRAUMA AND FEELINGS

1. Have children identify verbally – mad, sad, glad, afraid. Teach them this by doing it yourself and pointing out feelings on TV.
2. Validate your children’s feelings. Feelings are OK. Feelings are not bad, even anger and sadness. It’s how we handle them that can be bad.
3. Encourage the expression of feelings and show compassion for them. “Seems like you’re feeling angry..... Is it about.....?” Don’t try to force them to feel better right away. If they won’t talk to you, ask why. Ask if they’re trying to protect you or feel you can’t handle what they have to say. Assure them you can and they can tell you anything.
4. Teaching healthy feeling expression. “Don’t push your sister. Go outside and kick your soccer ball.” Children may need to vent with action before they can talk about it.
5. Teach children to ask for help. Build networks to help you and your kids: church, clubs, teachers, friends. Talking about your feelings really does help.
6. Teach children how to soothe themselves when feeling bad; to nurture themselves by taking walks or imagining their favorite color or something they want to do in the future.
7. If you are a spiritual family, try using that. Someone bigger than you is helping look out for us.
8. Teach your children to let go and not hold on to a grudge.

DESTRUCTIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH TRAUMA AND FEELINGS

1. Shaming feelings: “Oh grow up.” “Be a man.” “Don’t act like a baby.”
2. Ignoring kids’ feelings.
3. Criticizing their feelings: “You shouldn’t feel that.” “That’s not the right feeling to have.”
4. Teaching kids to stuff down their feelings and just move on.
5. Being a bully, being grandiose, playing super cool.
6. Creating a crisis to get attention: drinking, drug abuse.
7. Not being emotionally available for the child: “I feed and clothe them. Isn’t that enough?”
8. Running away or getting stuck in the victim mode or in hatred or depression.

GUIDELINES FOR DIVORCING PARENTS

DON'TS

1. Don't pump the children for information about the other parent.
2. Don't try to control the other parent.
3. Don't use the children to carry messages back and forth.
4. Don't argue in front of the children.
5. Don't discuss child support issues with the children.
6. Don't put the children in the position of having to take sides.
7. Don't use the children as pawns to hurt the other parent.

DO'S

1. Tell the children about the divorce together, if possible.
2. Answer the children's questions honestly while avoiding unnecessary details.
3. Reassure the children that they are not to blame for the divorce.
4. Tell the children they are loved and that they will be taken care of.
5. Include the other parent in school and other activities.
6. Encourage the relationship between the child and the other parent.
7. Be consistent and be on time to pick up and return the child.
8. Develop a workable parenting plan that gives the children access to both parents.
9. Guard against canceling plans with the children.
10. Establish two homes for the children with two fully involved parents.
11. Give the children permission to have a loving, satisfying, relationship with the other parent.

From: S.M.I.L.E. Program Video: Listen to the Children

PARENT'S RIGHTS

As a parent, you have certain rights. Unless ordered differently by the Court, you have the following rights:

1. You have the right to be a part of your child's life.
2. You have the right to communicate with your children by phone and by letter, and to send packages.
3. You have the right to regular, scheduled visitations or time periods with your child.
4. You have the right to make the decisions for your child when your child is with you. That means that during your scheduled time with the child, the child care you choose is up to you. It also means that you decide whose company your child will share during your time.
5. You have a right to copies of your child's school and medical records. This will be mentioned in the parenting plan formed during mediation.
6. You have the right to set the rules in your own home, such as bed times, etc. It is best if parents can harmonize the rules as much as possible in both homes but when disagreements exist about child-raising techniques, this is not always possible. Children adjust to things being different at each home, just as they adjust to different rules at school and at home.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

1. You have the right to see and spend time with both of your parents.
2. You have the right to call or send a letter to either one of your parents.
3. You have a right to your own feelings and a right to tell people what your feelings are.
4. You have a right to not be used as a messenger between your parents.
5. You have the right to love both your parents.
6. You have the right to not be forced to choose which parent you will live with. Parents make these choices.

EXPLANATION FOR THE DIVORCE

When we were married, we were happy. And when you were born, we were so happy – you are a wonderful part of this marriage.

But, life has its ups & downs, its high spots and its low spots. As you can tell, we have been in a low spot for a long time. You may have seen how we cannot agree on: _____ (Simple example, no blaming).

If you have sought help (pastor, counselor, etc.) tell them so now.

But nothing has helped and we believe that it is best for everyone that we divorce.

This is not your fault in any way. There is nothing that you said or did or did not say or did not do, that has caused this in any way. This is between your mom/dad and me.

We both love you and you will be well cared for always.

Then ask if they have any questions. Answer them selectively if needed – remember they do not need the details that are not appropriate for them to know. And answer them honestly while avoiding bad mouthing or blaming.

If you can do this together – it is even better.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you believe you are in an abusive relationship, NOW may be the time to think about ways to make yourself safer.

When someone with whom you have an intimate relationship uses physical violence, threats, emotional abuse, harassment or stalking to control your behavior, they may be committing domestic violence.

If you have or are anticipating domestic violence we suggest that you call a local shelter in **Prescott at (928) 445-4673**, or the **Verde at (800) 930-7233**, ahead of time to discuss and develop a safety plan. In the meantime the following is some advice about how you can help protect yourself during a violent outburst:

1. *Leave or stay away from the kitchen or other room with weapons.*
2. *Stay out of rooms that do not have exits, like the bathroom or closets.*
3. *If possible, get to a room with an exit and/or a phone.*
4. *Develop a code word or signal for friends, children and neighbors to call the police.*
5. *Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.*
6. *Teach your children to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.*
7. *Use your instincts.*