



**AMOS ADVOCATES**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## Children & Divorce: What to Say

Age-appropriate guidance for supporting children through family change.

### What children most need to hear

- You are loved by both parents.
- This is an adult decision. You did not cause it and you cannot fix it.
- You are allowed to love both parents and enjoy time with each of them.
- We will tell you what changes affect you and what will stay the same.
- You can ask questions and talk about your feelings.

### Age-appropriate guidance

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ages 3-6</b>  | Use simple, concrete language. Repeat reassurance. Focus on where the child will sleep, who will pick them up, and when they will see each parent.                    |
| <b>Ages 6-10</b> | Give straightforward explanations without adult details. Expect questions about school, holidays, activities, friends, and whether the family will get back together. |
| <b>Ages 9-12</b> | Invite questions and acknowledge mixed emotions. Avoid asking the child to choose sides or take responsibility for adult decisions.                                   |
| <b>Teens</b>     | Give more room for privacy and opinions while maintaining parental boundaries. Ask what changes are hardest and what support would help.                              |

### What not to put on the child

- Do not ask the child to carry messages.

- Do not question the child about the other parent's personal life.
- Do not ask the child to keep adult secrets.
- Do not blame the other parent in front of the child.
- Do not make the child responsible for choosing the schedule or resolving disputes.

## Conversation starters

"What feels different for you right now?"

"What are you worried might change?"

"What would make transitions between homes easier?"

"Is there something you wish both parents understood?"

## Books families may find helpful

**Ages 3-6:** *Two Homes* by Claire Masurel; *Was It the Chocolate Pudding?* by Sandra Levins; *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst; *Standing on My Own Two Feet* by Tamara Schmitz.

**Ages 6-10:** *Dinosaurs Divorce* by Laurene Krasny Brown and Marc Brown; *It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear* by Vicki Lansky; *Fred Stays with Me!* by Nancy Coffelt.

**Ages 9-12:** *The Suitcase Kid* by Jacqueline Wilson; *The List of Things That Will Not Change* by Rebecca Stead.

**Teens:** *My Parents Are Divorced, Too* by Elizabeth Thayer and Jeffrey Zimmerman; *The Divorce Help Book for Teens* by Cynthia MacGregor; *How to Survive Your Parents' Divorce* by Nancy D. Wiseman.

## When extra support may help

Consider seeking support from a pediatrician, school counselor, or licensed mental-health professional if a child has persistent changes in sleep, eating, school performance, behavior, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, or expresses hopelessness or fear.

## Parent reflection

**One reassurance my child  
needs to hear:**

**One adult topic I will keep  
away from my child:**

**One routine I can make more  
predictable:**

**Important:** This resource is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not legal, medical, mental-health, or financial advice. Services, eligibility requirements, and program availability can change. Contact the listed organization directly for current information.