



Lisa Gabardi, Ph.D.

www.gabardi.com

Psychotherapy~Mediation~Divorce Consultation

Practical, Compassionate Guidance toward Well-Being, Resilience, and Healthy Relationships

TELLING YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT DIVORCE

1. General Best Practices (*Consult a divorce specialist for specific guidance for your family circumstances*)
 - a. Both parents together telling all the children at the same time. If children are significantly different in ages, follow up with them separately to talk further at their own age level.
 - b. 2-3 weeks before a parent will be moving out of the home. Less time for young children who don't have a long-term sense of time. More time for older children.
 - c. Have many details decided (living arrangements and at least a temporary plan of when the children will have time with each parent) so that you can give children specific information about what they can expect.
 - d. A comfortable place to talk (usually at home) but that is not a special place for the child (not their bedrooms or a child play area).
 - e. Keep it brief and focused on key points listed below.
 - f. Parents can show genuine emotions, however maintain personal control. Otherwise your emotions may be scary or distracting to your children's experience of this event. Focus on your children and their needs and reassure them you can take care of yourself and help support them. Some emotion is understandable and can validate for children their own emotional experience.

2. General Structure
 - a. Introduce the topic without beating around the bush. "We have important news"
 - b. Mom and Dad have decided to separate/divorce/live separately/not be married...
 - c. Mom and Dad were unable to live well together married, were unable to resolve our differences or some variant so we decided to restructure our family to be parents together from two homes. This decision is not their fault. Validate children's emotions about hearing this news.
 - d. Discuss specifics of what will change for them, what will happen next.
 - e. Discuss specifics of what will stay the same for them.
 - f. Reassure that you are still a family, you both love them very much, will help them adjust, and will both always be their parents and remain active in their lives.

Need more help? Contact Dr. Gabardi at www.gabardi.com or 503-629-0272

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