



## **Helping Children Through Divorce, by Divorce Coach Betsy Ross, LICSW, CGP**

by ADMIN on MARCH 4, 2010

*[The Divorce Collaborative LLC](#) of Medway and Attleboro Massachusetts is pleased to introduce our colleague and guest blogger, Betsy Ross, LICSW, CGP. Betsy is a Massachusetts divorce coach and a member of the [Massachusetts Collaborative Law Council](#). Betsy's expertise in collaborative divorce coaching, couples/family therapy, and group dynamics helps her to assist clients in emotionally managing the difficult feelings associated with divorce, establish healthy co-parenting skills, and plan for a better life going forward. Betsy has offices in Stoughton and Sharon, MA.*

### ***What can you do to minimize the negative effects of divorce on your children and your family life?***

*Helping children through divorce should be every parent's priority*  
Here are the top-tips to keep your children healthy and safe.

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**Tell the truth in an age appropriate fashion.** No need to go into details but let your kids know what is really happening. Sometimes we try to protect them by not telling them what is happening or about to happen. Doing so will only confuse and worry them if they already suspect that something is wrong. Kids are very smart and can sense when family life is not OK. Let them know, as simply as possible, what is going on and what they can expect.

**Listen to your children's concerns.** At times we assume that if our children aren't saying anything, then things must be all right. This is not always the case. Sometimes we need to give our children permission to say what is upsetting or worrying them, even if it hurts for us to hear it. Everyone in the family is and will continue to be effected by the state of your marriage. Give them a chance to share with you how it is effecting them and what their concerns are. It will help them to have permission to say how they feel rather than suffer in silence.

**Do not discuss your spouse's flaws with your children.** You are talking about your child's other parent whom they love no matter what! If you put them in a position where they have to listen to your negative thoughts or feelings about their other parent, you are forcing them to feel disloyal just for listening and hurting their relationship with their parent. No adult has the right to sabotage a child's relationship with their parent no matter what! Trying to get your children to take sides in a divorce is cruel and will ultimately hurt your relationship with them.

**Make sure your children have their own space at both parents' homes.** It doesn't have to be a separate room. Even if it's just in the corner of a room, there should be a place for them, that is exclusively theirs, in each residence. Set up some shelves, a bureau, a bookcase...whatever will help your children to feel at home in both places. This is where they live no so don't make them feel like visitors.

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**Remember that your child is not your best friend, confidant, or therapist.** No matter how old or sophisticated your child is, they are not equipped emotionally to hear your deep dark thoughts about your marriage, your spouse, your life, or your problems. They are your children. They need to be allowed to be themselves with their own concerns and remain as unburdened by your mistakes and difficulties as possible.

**Tell your children (repeatedly) that the divorce isn't their fault.** Believe it or not, children often blame themselves for what happens, even for your divorce. They may actually think that if they had been better at cleaning their room, getting A's, behaving better, etc. then it wouldn't have happened. It is your duty to repeatedly remind them that they had nothing at all to do with your divorce. It's never a child's fault.

**Learn to control yourself around your soon to be ex-spouse.** Your children have undoubtedly had their fill of listening to the two of you yell and bicker. Enough. Someone has to act like an adult and take the high road. It might as well be you. Don't say it, bite your tongue, turn the other cheek, walk away...whatever works to keep your children from being exposed to even more fighting between the two of you. Behave yourself when your former spouse is present or on the phone. Be polite and courteous and always remember that your children are watching and listening to what you do.

**Don't just give up and accept whatever is being offered.** While you may be feeling guilty and just want to get it over by agreeing to more than you should, resist! You need to make sure that what you agree to will help you to create a new life for yourself going forward. If you take care of your needs, within reason, you will be better able to take care of your children's needs too.

**Get help for yourself and your kids.** You may need a counselor or coach to talk with. Your children may need a counselor or coach to talk with. You all may be experiencing emotional stress and duress in the form of stomachaches,

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headaches, sleeplessness, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, nausea, etc. Talk to your family doctor, a therapist, coach, pastor, etc. about what you can do to get help.

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