

ALBUQUERQUE DIVORCE LAWYER BLOG

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ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Harm to Children in a Divorce Can Last a Lifetime!

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The option for divorce is an adult right. Certain situations make continuing a relationship difficult, even impossible, particularly when differences appear irreconcilable. In fact, a divorce decree may usher in a period of relief and freedom for the adults involved; however, research shows these same positive effects may not transfer to the children involved. In fact, according to a longitudinal study of children of divorce over a span of twenty-five years, there are certain consequences that children may suffer long into adulthood after witnessing/enduring the divorce of their parents.

The children chosen for this study were considered to have achieved proper developmental and academic levels, and never received prior counseling for emotional problems. Children of poverty and ethnicity were not involved, thus the sample group consisted predominantly of middle-class, Caucasian children. Those constructing the study thought this group would present a look at divorce under the best possible conditions.

At the 25-year-mark, 73% of the original sample was interviewed, along with a similar group of people who had grown up within families who remained intact.

The study revealed that children of divorce, no matter the circumstances, may not be as resilient as once thought. Thus, the study recharted the impact divorce has on children as more of a life-transforming event that may stick with certain individuals indefinitely, than merely something that someone recovers from and moves on.

The findings for the impact on children are not surprising and have long been recognized. The adverse consequences to children include:

1. higher anxiety levels;
2. poorer views on the reliability of relationships;

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3. more behavioral problems than their peers;
4. more difficulty in social situations;
5. less opportunity for higher education than their peers; and
6. earlier drug and alcohol use.

The long term consequences are equally concerning. Some of the findings in adult children twenty-five years later included:

1. intrusive negative memories and a sense of foreboding;
2. heightened fears of failure;
3. poorer conflict resolution skills.
4. more difficulty in decision making;
5. less likely to marry, and if married, less satisfied with their marriage and a higher chance of divorce; and
6. less likely to have children.

At the core of the difficulties for adult children of divorce are a loss of hope, a lack of positive images regarding marital partnerships, as well as difficulty in choosing their own partners and establishing healthy marital relationships.

So, what can be done to minimize the effects of divorce on children? The study suggests that giving kids an opportunity to truly voice their feelings and concerns through "expressive therapy" may help. This could be done in either individual or group settings, where the kids are taught how to deal candidly with tough issues such as love and trust.

It is also advised that therapists address abandonment issues immediately, so that participants don't flee the therapy relationship before progress can be made. Another suggestion involved parents having an open discussion with children, in an age appropriate sense, regarding the reasons for the divorce. It was discovered that many children felt an overwhelming sense of foreboding due to a lack of understanding. Lastly, counseling with both parents and children could explore the mistakes that had been made in the marital relationship, so that a child can learn conflict management and resolution skills.

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Put most simply, it is recommended that parents reassure their children that once grown, they are capable of having lasting, healthy relationships of their own. The hope is to view divorce less as inevitable and more as a result of preventable human mistakes.

If you're going through a divorce, it is important to remain mindful of both short-term and long-term consequences children may suffer. Equally important is to be aware of some remedies that can offer both you and your child a brighter, more confident future. To guide you throughout the divorce process, contact an experienced family law attorney that can help you implement a plan to take both the consequences and remedies into account.

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