

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Children's Behaviour At Different Ages

(Information Adapted from *Positive Parenting*, by Philippe Barrette and *Children of*

Divorce, by Mitchell A. Baris and Carla B. Garrity)

Age	Typical Characteristics	Separation issues	How they might show their stress	Suggestions for parents
0-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Infants are dependant on parents for meeting their needs *They develop a sense of trust through having a predictable and consistent caregiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Infants may feel the loss of contact with a primary caretaking parent * Loss of familiar and comfortable environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Difficulty toileting or sleeping * Slowing down in learning new skills *Afraid to leave parent; clingy with parent *general crankiness, temper tantrums, crying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Attempt to allow both parents to bond with infant *Meet infant's needs promptly and consistently * try not to separate the infant from his or her primary caregiver for long periods of time *18 month to 2 year old children can tolerate longer separations from their primary caregiver than infants, especially if an older sister or brother will be with them. Prepare the child for the separation by explaining what will happen.
2-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Growth of a sense of independence * Are able to keep absent parent in mind to comfort themselves for extended periods *Verbal skills develop for expression of feelings and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *May have a sense of responsibility for the separation * Are anxious about basic needs being met - food, shelter, visitation * May fantasize about reuniting parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Regression - returning to security blankets, old toys, lapses in toilet training *Making up fantasy stories *Anxious at bedtime, sleeping fitfully, waking frequently *Fear of being abandoned by both parents *Emotionally needy, seeking physical contact *More irritable, aggressive, has temper tantrums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Reassure your preschooler by telling them you love them and cuddling them *Allow some regression *Keep routines consistent *Explain what is going to happen to the child and role play future events *Child will adapt to longer separations from one parent through frequent visits and overnights with the other parent.

Age	Typical Characteristics	Separation issues	How they might show their stress	Suggestions for parents
5-8 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Are developing peer and community relationships *Moral development progresses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *See the separation as their problem *May cling to fantasies that their parents will reunite *Fear abandonment and will long for the absent parent regardless of the quality of the previous relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * General sadness, feeling abandoned and rejected * Crying and sobbing * Fantasizing about parents' reconciliation * Conflicts of loyalty; feeling physically torn apart; problems with impulsive behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Try to have each parent spend as much time with the child as possible *Allow the child to express his or her feelings *Help the child understand that the decision to separate had nothing to do with him or her *Encourage the child to draw pictures about her or his feelings, and to explain the story and what it means to him or her.
9-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Children of this age are developing an increased awareness of self, evaluating own strengths and weaknesses as compared to others *Pre-adolescents are working at fitting in to the peer-level social order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Although they see the separation as the parents' problem, they are often angry about the parents' inability to work the problems out *Likely to take sides, siding against the parent they think wanted the separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Intense anger at parent blamed for causing the separation *Physical complaints like headaches and stomach aches *Become overactive to avoid thinking about the separation *Feel ashamed of what's happening in the family and different from other kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Parents need to try to remain involved and honest, and to avoid blaming each other * Pre adolescents can spend vacations with either parent *Children should be allowed to contact the other parent *Maintain a consistent routine *Inform the child of what is happening and what will occur *Keep teachers informed of any stress the child is feeling and get help for school problems *Give children permission to continue loving both parents
13-18 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Teens are solidifying their identity and establishing a sense of self in relation to the rules and regulations of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Embarrassment about family *Possible de-idealization of one or both parents *Will place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Withdraw from family life and spend more time with peers *Feel hurried to become independent *Engage in trying out behaviour such as sexual acting out, drinking, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Be consistent about discipline and limits while allowing for normal adolescent behaviour *Allow more freedom and choices *Find time to be with the teen and be flexible with

	society	peer needs ahead of family and therefore may not want to visit with non-custodial parent	drug experimentation *Worry about their own future loves and marriage *Chronic fatigue and difficulty concentrating	their schedules *Give teens input about the visitation schedule, but don't burden them with the responsibility of deciding on the visitation schedule
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