

# Separation and Divorce

## A Guide for Parents and Guardians

1. **Using age-appropriate language and ideas, tell your child what is happening and how it affects them.** Be honest in assuring the child how he/she will be taken care of. It may be difficult for your child to accept that the divorce is final.
2. **Be open, receptive and non-judgmental to his or her feelings.** It is natural for your child to be upset over the breakup of the family. It is helpful when your child is allowed to express feelings in a safe way.
3. **Tell your child that although they don't live together, his/her mother and father will always be the natural parents.**
4. **Assure your child that the divorce is not his or her fault.** Children often feel that they caused the divorce or, in some magical way, could have kept it from happening. This is not true.
5. **Do not carry the stress of divorce into your relationship with your children.** Small problems seem huge.
6. **Understand that children cannot help with adult problems.** Don't ask your child to advise you on problems such as money and relationships.
7. **Avoid saying bad things about a former partner.** Carrying messages may put the child in the middle of hurtful feeling. Don't pump your child for information.
8. **Communicate directly with your former partner.** Carrying messages may put the child in the middle of hurtful feelings. Don't pump your child for information.
9. **When homes are split, the child should have his/her own clothes, toys, and space in both locations if possible.** Children need to feel they belong and are important.
10. **Be sensitive when dating.** Children of separation and divorce are vulnerable to fears of abandonment or betrayal.
11. **Both natural parents must be given respect in the presence of the child.** Advise friends and family members not to say bad things about the former partner for the child to hear.
12. **Allow time for healing.** It takes months or even years for the child to grieve the loss.



For More Information, please contact:  
**Advocates for Children**  
P.O. Box 3316, Auburn, ME 04210  
157 Main Street, Lewiston, Maine  
(207) 783-3990  
info@advocatesforchildren.net

