

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

There are a number of factors that affect children's adjustment to divorce and separation.

- The degree of parental conflict
- Parental adjustment and quality of parenting
- The cumulative stress associated with multiple changes
- Residential arrangements and parental remarriage
- Individual child characteristics, such as personality, temperament, developmental stage

The degree of **parental conflict** is **the major risk factor** associated with children's adjustment to divorce. There is a strong association between intense marital conflict and children's adjustment. Research has demonstrated that children have more psychological problems when parents are in conflict either during marriage or following separation and divorce.

The single best thing parents can do to promote their children's psychological, emotional and mental health is to reduce levels of conflict to be able to parent together in a cooperative non confrontational manner.

Low parental conflict has been identified as one of the major protective factors following divorce.

Adolescents need to be given time and space to work out their own reactions to their parents separation. If pressured by either parent, adolescents are likely to react with anger and rejection. Adolescents typically need flexibility in arrangements to allow them to participate in normal adolescent social activities and school events (Family Court of Australia, 2001).

The information above (and more) is contained in a monograph developed by the Australian Psychological Society available by download from Auseinet.

Relationships Australia provides information and programs to assist separating and divorced parents to reduce the impact on children. '**Rebound**' is their program to support young people after family separation. (www.relationships.com.au) (Ph: 1300 364 277)

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