



How to Help Your Teen Cope With the Effects of Divorce

Presented by: **verywell** family

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When parents divorce, it can be difficult for the whole family. For teens, divorce can be particularly difficult. Teenagers are more likely to cope with the effects of divorce by engaging in risky behaviors. Drug use and early sexual activity are more common among teens of divorce than their peers. If you're going through a divorce, it's important to know what type of things you may see from your teen.

Common Effects

Most kids are resilient and don't exhibit psychological problems.¹ However, even if your child is not exhibiting symptoms of serious mental illness, they may still be struggling.

Common impacts of divorce on teens include:

- Academic problems, like poor grades
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased stress
- Sadness or anger at one parent or both
- Defiance and non-compliance
- Depression
- Behavior problems at school
- Trouble getting along with siblings, peers, and parents
- Difficulty forming intimate relationships

Risky Behaviors

Risky behaviors are also more likely in teens whose parents are divorced. In fact, the risk that a teen will engage in risky behavior increases by a factor of 1.5 to 2 in teens of divorce.

Examples of risky behavior teens may engage in:

- Substance abuse
- Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts
- Early sexual activity

How to Help Your Teen

Although divorce will be tough for you and everyone else in the family, it's essential to do your best to be present with your teen. Talking to your teen and showing genuine interest in their activities can often go a long way. Think of ways that allow your teen to feel close to you as you go through this rough time together.

Talk to your teen and encourage them to share worries, fears, and frustrations. If you aren't sure of the way things will unfold, admit the uncertainty to your teen. If you're putting a house up for sale or aren't sure where you will move, acknowledge how difficult such uncertainty can be.

Do:

- Have honest communication about changes in the family
- Offer safe space for them to express their emotions
- Make sure they feel comfortable asking questions
- Encourage their relationship with their other parent
- Allow them to weigh in on decisions about their lives
- Offer consistent affection and support
- Attend their extra-curricular activities
- Maintain a consistent, predictable schedule
- Be consistent with rules and discipline
- Model appropriate behavior

Don't:

- Put your teens in the middle of a conflict between their parents
- Use your teens as messengers
- Argue in front of your teen
- Bad-mouth your child's other parent in front of them

For more information visit www.verywellfamily.com

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