

## **Top 10 list of things parents can do to help their children adjust to family change:**

1. Offer simple explanations about the changes in the family. Children especially need to hear what will *not* change, i.e. will attend same school, will continue with swimming lessons, will keep their dog, etc.
2. Reassure children many, many times that the changes are not their fault. They didn't cause it, they can't fix it, but you will help them cope. You can't say this enough.
3. Help your children accept that divorce is a final decision.
4. Do not allow your children to become your peers. Avoid confiding in and relying on them as you would a good friend. Children do not do well while attempting to meet adult emotional needs.
5. *Do* involve your children in household chores and decisions. Tell them that their input is valuable. Feeling needed in this way is a good thing.
6. Do not give up your power as a parent out of guilt. Your children need clear and enforced limits now more than ever. Because the changes cause insecurity, children will test those limits to see if you are for real. Set limits and consequences with calmness and clarity.
7. If one parent drops out of your child's life, say: "I don't know why your mother/father hasn't made arrangements to see you, but I know one thing, it has *nothing* to do with you! You are very lovable and I enjoy being with you very much."
8. Do not criticize the other parent. It directly affects children's identities. They see themselves as half Mom and half Dad. When one parent is labeled stupid or lazy, children assume they must be thought of that way too. And it actually causes them to think less of the criticizer in the long run.
9. Do not put children in the middle by using them as spies when visiting the other parent, by asking them to carry messages back and forth, or by expecting them to take sides between parents.
10. Listen. Take time before bedtime, in the car, on Saturdays to listen. Begin by saying you know it has been hard for them. Repeat their words back to them. Let them know that all their feelings are OK and talking about them really helps.

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<http://www.ojd.state.or.us/mar/familylaw/ParentResources.htm>