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**Children and Divorce**

**By Karen Zastudil**

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You and your spouse have decided to end your marriage. Although this has been a difficult decision for you and your spouse, it can be a very complicated one for your children. Divorce in many ways is like facing a death in the family, and a grieving process takes place for everyone involved.

Often times after a divorce, you need to rediscover who you are, overcome your own fears and determine how to begin making a new life for you and your children. Once the grieving process has taken place, don't assume things will suddenly go smoothly — especially when you start dating again. It may be hard for your children to adjust to the "new you" and patience is key. The process of adapting may take longer than what you would like and your children's emotions may be like a roller coaster ride. You have spent years parenting your children and devoting your life to them. Now that you are focusing more time on yourself, your children may become disheartened and insecure. It's extremely important that at this time you strive to attain a balance in your life and enter this new phase of your life gradually. Your children will need you more than ever for support, comfort and reassurance. Many times children become unsure of themselves and aren't sure where they fit into your life, but rest assured that eventually they will come around.

As you begin uncovering the new you, it's not wrong to make time for yourself, but when it seems appropriate, include your children. You are a mom first, and you would not want to sacrifice the needs of your children. Maintain moments of "single" freeness to time with your friends and not in front of your children. As you begin dating again, feeling silly, giddy and young, do it in a way that doesn't affect them. Introducing a lot of casual dates into your children's lives can cause anxiety and confusion. Reassure them that your date is not a replacement for "dad" or them. You would not want your children to feel they are being abandoned.

Your children still need to know that you are the parent and that they can depend on you to provide the love and emotional stability they need.

Karen Zastudil is a retired financial analyst with a BA in Economics and Marketing – as the parent, Karen is an advocate for others who are interested in parenting and womens issues. Karen shares her wisdom and her resources at <http://www.womenatthesummit.com>

## **Children And Divorce**

**By Stephen Kreutzer**

A recent statistic shows that almost half of all marriages end in divorce. Divorce is difficult for everyone involved, but maybe the hardest on children. Most often they experience many feelings that they do not understand. They go through a range of emotions and need their parents to understand. If you are going through a divorce getting to understand how your children are dealing with it is important.

When parents divorce they often put their children in the center of arguments and a game of emotional tug of war. To avoid this sort of thing parents need to work together. Even though their marriage is over they are still parents together. The child needs to understand many things about the divorce. Parents need to keep in touch with their children and understand the many feelings they may be having. Older children, especially, can go through periods where they act out as a way to cope with the divorce. Many times children feel the divorce is their fault. They may worry about the future and how to deal with other events, like parent's day at school. Both parents need to show the children that they can work together and not fight. At the same time it is important to let the children know that you are not getting back together. Establishing some sort of family structure is a necessity to help children get back to "normal".

Children will react different depending on their age. The following list explains a little about each age group and how they react to divorce.

Age 3–5: Regression to a more infantile state, problems sleeping, fear of separation

Age 6–8: Fantasies of parents getting back together, open emotions

Age 8–11: Anger, treat one parent as good the other as bad, take a caregiver role

Age 12–18: Depression, violent actions, judgmental of parents, develop anxiety about own relationships

Learning to help your children cope through divorce is possible the most important step in the divorce process. Children have no choice in the matter and may feel completely left out if their feelings are not recognized.

Stephen Kreutzer is a freelance publisher based in Cupertino, California. He publishes articles and reports in various ezines and provides divorce resources at



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