



Toolkit for Divorcing with Dignity

Tip Sheet #7: Divorcing with children

Divorce with children develops with a different set of obstacles compared to couples without children. Divorce can represent a pivotal and sometimes traumatic shift in a child's world. The child may feel like they are losing their family, and with that comes a wave of different emotions. As parents, you may feel a sense of guilt, shame, or failure. Whichever feeling you may experience, here are some ways in which navigating a divorce with children might differ from if children aren't involved.

- 1. Stigma-** If you find yourself struggling with others making assumptions about your situation, do your best to check in with how you feel. It is easy for others to say what is “best for the children” or what they would do if they were in your situation. Rely on a close circle of confidants to share your feelings and experiences with.
- 2. Court and Lawyers-** Child custody, visitation rights, and who gets the kids for holidays are some of the most difficult issues for divorcing couples to resolve. Some parents can negotiate and come to a compromise on their own, but it is still wise to consult with someone who knows the state's laws thoroughly and get advice on how to proceed.
- 3. Dating-** Take some time to think about what you're looking for in a new partner and how long you want to wait before dating again. Talk to your child about your new adult friends. Allow them to express their feelings and opinions.
- 4. Property-** Splitting up your assets may go smoothly, but some of our most valuable things don't have a price tag. Consider your children's school zone and other community resources when dividing family property, as well as your motivation for family keepsakes. If you are unable to locate your ex-spouse or reach an agreement, consider making use of a lawyer to move forward with this part of your divorce.