



# Risk Factors for Children of Divorce

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Divorce is often said to be one of the most traumatic events an adult can experience. It is no surprise then that the research shows divorce can also have a traumatic effect on children whose parents are going through it.

The risk of having emotional, social, psychological and academic problems is much higher for children with separating parents, than it is for children with parents who live together.

The degree to which a child may be affected by his or her parents split can vary greatly. Some children will have minimal effect, some more extreme effects.

Studies have revealed some of the most commonly-known factors which would contribute to the child being negatively affected by divorce. The experience of most family law lawyers would also confirm these factors as more likely to result in emotional or developmental harm to the children.

For example, high conflict separations where the parents do not shelter the child from the conflict is perhaps the most obvious situation where the child will suffer the most ill-effects from the divorce.

One of the other important factors is whether there is any psychiatric illness or personality disorder of the parent(s). Generally speaking, if one or both parents have such a disorder, and/or are not handling the separation well emotionally, it will logically affect the child.

Parents going through a separation should be very conscious of their emotions and how they will affect their children. There are numerous personal counseling resources available locally, many of which are free, paid by an insurance plan or available at a reduced cost depending upon income. Any parent going through a separation should seek counseling, if only for a brief time.

Children are also more likely to suffer ill effects if their parents' separation means they lose important relationships. Clearly, a dramatic reduction in the amount of time they see one parent can be traumatic, but in a separation a child may also lose contact with grandparents and extended family.

In some cases changes in the parents' lives can also negatively affect the child. A re-marriage can cause trauma if the child's relationship with the step-parent or step-siblings is not a positive one.

As well, in a separation sometimes one parent has to relocate some distance away. Such a move can be emotionally damaging for a child. The child could lose one of the most important relationships in their life. If the child has to move as well, they will lose the friends, neighbours, a community, their school and extra-curricular activities.

It is often said that a divorce is one of the most financially

difficult experiences an adult can go through. The simple fact is that one household needs to be split into two using the same resources. Unstable financial resources are also a factor that will increase a child's risk of suffering harm from their parents separation.

Parents can work hard to shelter children from the effects of a divorce and separation. There are numerous resources available to teach parents how best to do this. Many children will cope quite well to this change in their lives. One resource that should not be discounted however is to arrange for counseling for children. Some professional help can make a huge difference in how the child copes.