

☀ How Are Your Older School Age Children Doing? (9-12 years)

Things to Consider

- Issues**
- see things as black and white; one parent is right, the other is wrong
 - shame or embarrassment about parents' separation
 - the separation threatens their own identity
 - need to overcome a sense of powerlessness
 - feel the need to take the "side" of one parent

Changes to watch for	Problem	No problem
• physical complaints (for example headache, fatigue, stomach ache)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• intense anger, especially at parent they see as to blame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• taking one parent's side against the other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• difficulty with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• difficulty playing and having fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• poor school performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• increased risk taking (for example, running away and drug experimentation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How you can help

- listen to child's feelings and complaints without taking sides or judging
- don't criticize the other parent to the child
- encourage the child to see good in the other parent
- don't fight in front of the child
- say positive things about the other parent occasionally
- don't pressure the child to take sides
- support the child's contact with the other parent (if this is possible)

Children's Worst Fears

- I did something wrong and that is why Mom and Dad are separating; it's my fault.
- If Mom and Dad loved each other before and now they don't, they might stop loving me too.

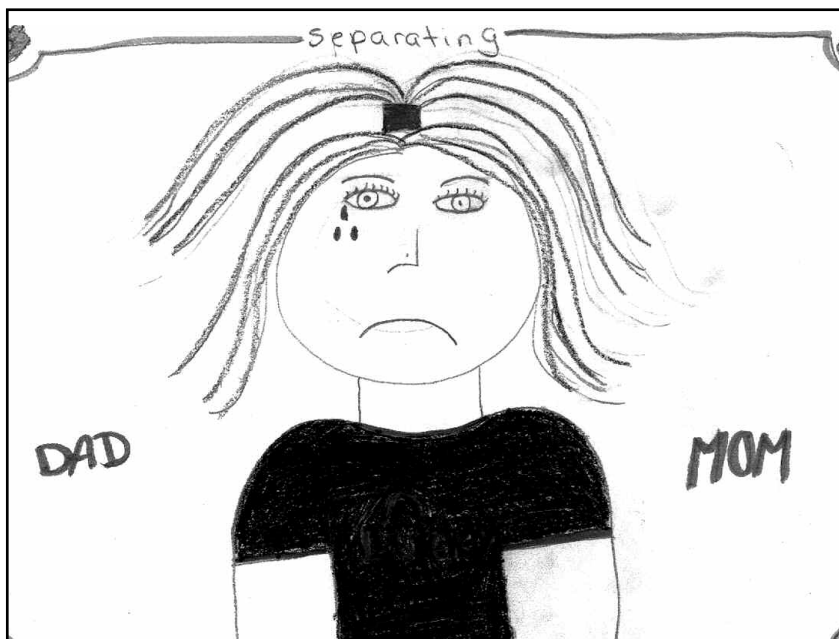
What Children Most Want to Know

- Mom and Dad will continue to love me.
- Mom and Dad will stop fighting.
- BOTH Mom and Dad will be here in my life.
- If I can't have that, at least one of my parents will be here in my life.

How Children Often Respond

In general:

- Children of all ages experience insecurity and anxiety when parents separate
- Pre-schoolers focus on security "who will take care of me"?
- Elementary school children show depression and/or anger.
- Junior high school students ask "why", "what is going on"?
- High school students question whether long-term commitment exists in relationships.



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