

Tips for parents on talking with their child during a divorce situation

Parents must talk with the child about matters that concern them. Agree in advance what you will say. If possible, talk with the child together.

Please take into account in the discussion

Parents should consider the child's thoughts and respect them, even if they conflict with the parents' own views.

Parents make the decisions and take responsibility for them.

Parents must explain their decision to the child.

It is good to discuss with your child the things that stay the same and the things that will change. Tell your child about the things he or she can influence.

At least the following points should be raised in the discussion:



Housing



Meeting rhythm, exchange day and exchange situations



School and day care



Pets, friends and hobbies



Who will transport belongings, and which items are important to the child?

It is important for the child to know:

- The divorce is not the child's fault.
- The child can talk openly about the divorce and his or her own life. The child has permission to ask questions. All kinds of feelings are allowed.
- Children have the right to maintain a relationship with their parents and other people who are important to them.
- The parents do their best to make sure the child is happy and well cared for.
- A child can get support in coping with the divorce, for example from the school counsellor.
- It can be comforting for a child to know that there are other children whose parents are divorced.
- A child's well-being can also be supported by knowing that the parents inform relatives, friends, and the daycare or school about the divorce.

Information for children and young people about their parents' divorce

+ DISCUSSION TIPS FOR PARENTS



My parents are getting divorced. What does it mean?



It is important that you understand. I will explain it to you.

Information for children and young people about their parents' divorce



Agreement

The parents agree together on matters concerning you. The issues to be settled in the agreement are:

- How does the divorce affect where you live? Do you live in just one home, or do you alternate between your parents' homes?
- How do you spend time and stay connected with your parents?
- Will your parents make decisions about you together in the future, or will only one parent make the decisions?

Your thoughts and wishes are important when making an agreement. You may tell them if you want. It is up to the adults to listen to you, so that they can take your wishes into account. Ultimately, it is the parents who decide on the content of the agreement.

You may find it difficult to share your thoughts, if you are afraid your parents will be upset.

Parents may sometimes disagree. You do not have to choose sides. You are allowed to love both parents equally.



Talking about divorce

You can talk and ask questions about the divorce. You may have a variety of thoughts and feelings about the divorce. The fact that your parents have decided to divorce is not because of you.



You have the right to know both your parents

It is your right to know both your parents, even if you only live with one of them.

Your rights can be exercised in many different ways. For example, you can spend time at your parents' house or you might meet up elsewhere, such as at a hobby. Calling or communicating with a parent can also be a good option.



Where to get help?

You can also talk about the divorce with people other than your parents:

- You can talk to the curator at your school.
- You can call the Lasten ja nuorten puhelin (Children and Young People's Helpline) 116 111 (Mannerheim Child Protection League, MLL). An adult will answer the call in Finnish. You can talk to the adult about anything. The call is free of charge.
- Persons aged 12 and over can discuss all their concerns in Finnish on the Sekasin.fi chat. You do not have to tell your name in the chat.



Child Welfare Officer

A child welfare officer can help your parents agree on your matters after the divorce. It is the child welfare officer's job to make sure that the agreement made by the parents is in your best interests.



The best interests of the child

The child's best interest is fulfilled when you feel safe and well. Then you can focus on your own things, friends, play and learning. Parents and other adults must consider your best interests when making decisions about you.

