

Institute of  
**Child Psychology**

# **Do & Do Not Checklist**

*Divorce and Separation*

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## *Insulating* CHILDREN FROM DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

### DO List:

- ✓ Simple but honest explanation so they understand it was not their fault (i.e., “mom and dad are better as friends, so we aren’t going to live together anymore, but we both love you very much”)
- ✓ Be available to listen---listening is about being “with” your child and allowing them to have all of their feelings, not about fixing it
- ✓ Reassurance it is not their fault
- ✓ Reassurance that both of you love them very much: when the children understand the parents stopped loving each other, they may also worry that someday parents will stop loving them
- ✓ Set up a regular visitation schedule that the child knows about in advance; for school age children it may be helpful to post it on the calendar on the fridge
- ✓ Always allow regular contact by phone, email or video---be careful how and if you choose to restrict this, especially in the beginning
- ✓ Minimize changes (i.e., keep them in the same programs, house, schools where possible)
- ✓ Allow them to keep things at both houses (essentials\*), but take certain items with them for security
- ✓ Consistent rules and routines in both homes
- ✓ When your child talks about the other parent, be neutral\* and supportive about relationship
- ✓ Spend more time with your child; proximity is very important when going through a difficult time
- ✓ Take responsibility for your own behavior; you cannot change or control your ex-partner but you can change and control yourself
- ✓ Take care of yourself: you can’t give from an empty cup



**PARENTS WHO ARE GOING THROUGH DIVORCE OFTEN BELIEVE THAT SHIELDING CHILDREN FROM THE STRESS OF THE SITUATION IS IN THE CHILDREN’S BEST INTEREST. BUT REGARDLESS OF THEIR PARENTS’ GOOD INTENTIONS, CHILDREN OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES CAUGHT IN AN EMOTIONAL WHIRLPOOL DURING THESE TIMES. INSTEAD OF PROTECTION, THEY NEED SUPPORT AND REASSURANCE DURING THIS TEMPORARILY STRESSFUL TIME. - (NCSU, 2014, ONLINE)**

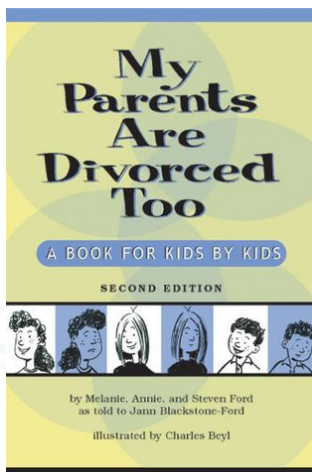
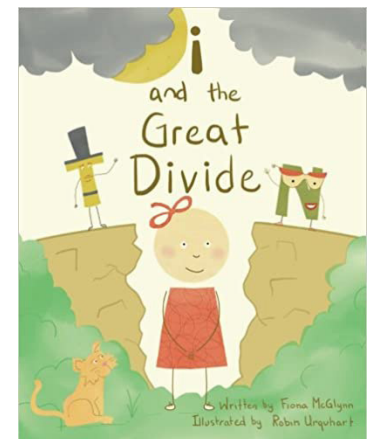
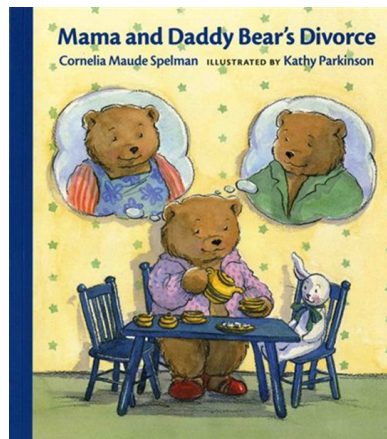
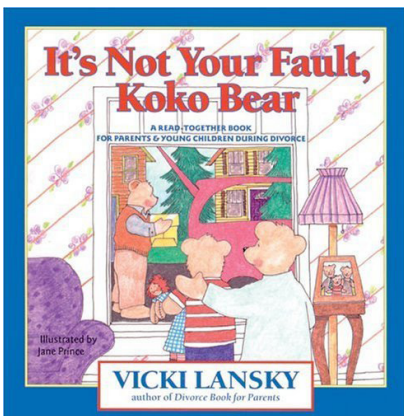
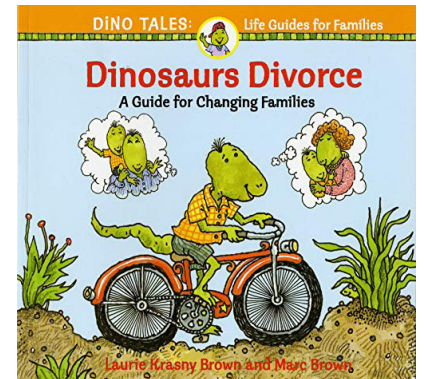
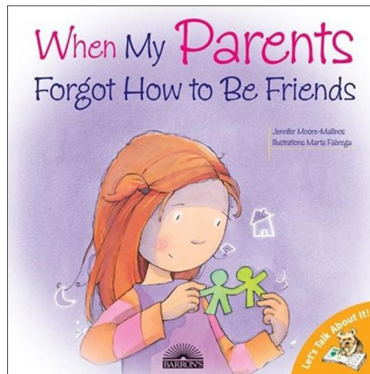
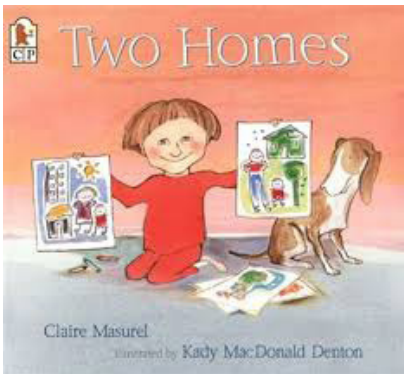


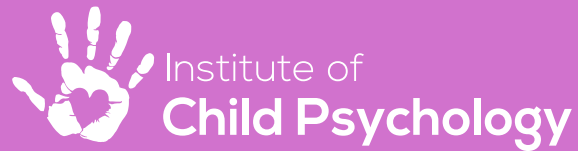
**DO NOT List:**

- ✗ Don't punish or reprimand immature behavior; come to expect it with big changes
- ✗ You don't need to be a Disneyland parent; understand that you need to work through your guilt outside of your children, and that they will love you even without the special treatment
- ✗ Don't argue or fight with your ex while your child is listening
- ✗ Never say negative things about the other parent even if they are being inappropriate; remember your child is half of that parent and when you criticize the other parent, you're criticizing your child!
- ✗ Parentification: do not treat your child like a friend, confidant, or surrogate spouse: adult conversations belong to adult ears.
- ✗ Do not encourage your child to have angry feelings about the other parents or allow them to say disrespectful things about that parent
- ✗ Never ask for a secret from the other parent
- ✗ Do not encourage your child to side with you against the other parent
- ✗ Never use a child as messenger to deliver information
- ✗ Don't use your child to get revenge on the other parent by denying child support or visitation; this only hurts your child
- ✗ Don't use your child as a spy to find out what the other parent is doing



## Bibliotherapy





The **Institute of Child Psychology** was founded to educate parents and professionals on issues pertaining to children's mental health, and to promote the psychological and emotional well-being of children and adolescents.

Our mission is to empower parents, teachers, therapists, social workers and psychologists by giving them pertinent insights, skills, and tools necessary to help children thrive.



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