

## **Divorce Recovery**

### **A Bill of Rights for the Sons and Daughters of Divorce**

Remember that marriage is always an agreement between two grown-ups. Also remember that if the marriage comes apart, it is by the choice of the two grown ups. The grown-ups are the married ones.

Divorce is a stressful time for everyone in the family. When a husband and a wife come apart it is stressful for them. It is the marriage that is coming apart; let us hope it is NOT the family that is coming apart. The family includes the children and others, but the children are the most directly affected. During this stressful time of the marriage coming apart it is the responsibility of the parents to continue to be parents to the children of the family and do what they can to keep the family together.

Parents need to behave in a way that will guard their children and keep the family operating for the children. Children love both of their parents and want to be with both parents and to be free to love them equally.

Following is a list of children's needs and rights when the family is in the midst of a separation or divorce between the parents. Here are some suggestions on how to keep the family functions for the children even as you and you spouse separate or divorce from each other but, remember, not from your children.

1. Every child has the right NOT to be asked to "choose sides" or be placed in a situation in which they have to take sides between their parents.
2. Every child has the right to be treated as a person and not as a pawn, a possession or a negotiating chip.
3. Every child has the right to freely and privately communicate with both parents.
4. Every child has the right to NOT be asked questions by one parent about the other.
5. Every child has the right NOT to be a messenger between parents.
6. Every child has the right to express his or her feelings.
7. Every child has the right to adequate visitation with both parents and to decide visitation in a manner that will best serve the needs of the child.
8. Every child has the right to love and have a continuing relationship with both parents without being made to feel guilty.
9. Every child has the right NOT to hear either parent say anything bad about the other parent.

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10. Every child has the right to the same educational opportunities and economic support that the child would have had if his/her parents did not separate or divorce.
11. Every child has the right to have what is in their best interest protected at all times.
12. Every child has the right to maintain their status as the child of both parents and NOT be expected to take on adult responsibilities for the sake of either parent's well being.
13. Every child has the right to request his/her parents to seek appropriate emotional, social and spiritual support when the parent is in need.
14. Every child has the right to expect consistent parenting at a time when little in their lives seem constant or secure (during separation and/or divorce).
15. Every child has the right to expect healthy relationship modeling from their parents, despite the recent events in their parent's lives.
16. Every child has the right to expect the utmost support when taking the time and steps needed to secure a healthy adjustment to the current life situation.

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