

## 10 Tips for Divorcing Parents

By Mike McCurley and the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers

1. **Never disparage your former spouse in front of your children.** Because children know they are “part mom” and “part dad,” the criticism can batter the child’s self esteem.
2. **Do not use your children as messengers between you and your former spouse.** The less the children feel a part of the battle between their parents, the better.
3. **Reassure your children that they are loved and that the divorce is not their fault.** Many children assume that they are to blame for their parents’ hostility.
4. **Encourage your children to see your former spouse frequently.** Do everything within your power to accommodate the visitation.
5. **At every step during your divorce, remind yourself that your children’s interests—not yours—are paramount, and act accordingly.** Lavish them with love at every opportunity.
6. **Your children may be tempted to act as your caretaker. Resist the temptation to let them.** Let your peers, adult family members, and mental health professionals be your counselors and sounding board. Let your children be children.
7. **If you have a drinking or drug problem, get counseling right away.** An impairment inhibits your ability to reassure your children and give them the attention they need at this difficult time.
8. **If you are the non-custodial parent, pay your child support.** The loss of income facing many children after divorce puts them at a financial disadvantage that has a pervasive effect on the rest of their lives.
9. **If you are the custodial parent and you are not receiving child support, do not tell your children.** It feeds into the child’s sense of abandonment and further erodes his and her stability.
10. **If at all possible, do not uproot your children.** Stability in their residence and the school life helps buffer children from the trauma of their parents’ divorce.