

D.I.V.O.R.C.E - don't let the children get stuck in the middle

Submitted by: Bojangle Communications

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January is the month when most people decide their marriage is over. Divorce is traumatic enough, but when children are involved the conflict that can arise between their parents can make children feel trapped.

Parent expert and author, Sue Atkins (<http://www.positive-parents.com/about.aspx>), is calling for parents going down the divorce route to present a united front and work together when it comes to helping their children through this major life change. The time for fighting is over.

"Parents often feel overwhelmed, confused and resentful, and panic about how they are going to handle changes in their family's way of life," says Sue Atkins. "These feelings can manifest as animosity which then turns the divorce process into a battle trapping the children in the middle." Parents need to realise that they can make positive choices during the emotional time of a divorce. Sue Atkins has some practical and effective advice to make the transition less painful for everyone:

1. What do your children need from you both? - think about the way you want to handle their insecurity & their need to express feelings. You will need to consider their need for security and reassurance that you will both still be their parents and both be there to love, support, nurture and guide them.

2. How will you tell them you are getting a divorce? - you will need to weigh up whether you tell each child on their own, together, or as a combination. You need to make a joint decision as to what is best for each of your children and for you as their parents. By both of you telling them together they will see that you are not blaming each other and that there is no need for them to take sides.

3. How will you answer their questions? – likely questions that will be asked are: "Will we still see you and spend time with you?" "Who will take us to football?" "Who will we live with and where?" "Will we still see Nana and Grandad?" You may not know all the answers just yet but you will need to reassure them that you will have more clarity and answers soon and that they do not need to worry.

4. Manage your emotions – if you see divorce as a negative, painful and angry time – it will be. If you see it as a major life crisis that can be handled with dignity in a positive way and is a step towards a new life with new opportunities – it will be. Your children will feel more secure if you appear calm and in control. You will inevitably want to cry, rant and vent your frustrations, just don't do it in front of your children. You are a role model and how you handle this major event is a blueprint for how they will handle stressful situations in their lives.

5. Give them reassurances and guarantees – each write seven reassurances and guarantees that you can honestly give to your children. These are things that will help your child cope with the enormous changes that are ahead. Be honest. Don't give false promises as you will destroy their confidence.

"Above all, work together. You may not have been a united front whilst married, but you must take this opportunity to work together for the good of your children," says Sue Atkins. "Remember: divorce

changes but does not end a family. Your children are now members of two families.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

1. Sue Atkins' is a parent coach and her company is Positive Parents = Confident Kids (www.positive-parents.com). Sue is a former Deputy Head with 22 years teaching experience and is an NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer.

2. Sue is the author of Raising Happy Children for Dummies - chapter 13 covers divorce. For more detailed strategies, techniques and practical tips can be found in Sue's CDs and Workbooks, e.g. "The Single Parent Toolkit" (<http://www.positive-parents.com/productsandresources.aspx>)

3. The next in Sue's series of Parenting Made Easy workshops is about Handling Divorce Positively. It will be held in April, for further details go to www.positive-parents.com/workshops.aspx or e-mail sue@positive-parents.com.

4. Positive Parents works with parents on improving and fine tuning their parenting skills via a range of toolkits (<http://www.positive-parents.com/productsandresources.aspx>), such as 'How to be a brilliant parent', 'Positive toddler taming' and 'Parenting made easy', runs one-to-one coaching sessions (<http://www.positive-parents.com/coaching.aspx>), workshops and seminars" (<http://www.positive-parents.com/workshops.aspx>). Sue's favourite phrase is "because kids don't come with a handbook".

5. For more about Sue's work and to receive her free monthly newsletter (<http://www.positive-parents.com/newsletter.aspx>) of practical tips and helpful advice for bringing up happy, confident, well-balanced children go to her website: www.positive-parents.com