

Can divorce be beneficial for children

[Family](#), [Divorce](#)



University I stared into his uncontrolled, demonic eyes just inches from mine as I watched his body tremble and quake with wrath. It was an unbridled anger I had encountered many times before. I listened as the sharp words escaped his mouth, piercing me like daggers. Not knowing if any hasty movement would have dire repercussions, I stood frozen, heart racing, undecided of my next move. Helplessness filled my soul.

I'd felt stuck for nearly 15 years now, married to this ticking time-bomb of a man, walking on eggshells daily, never knowing what was going to send him into a fit of rage. Why did I continue to stay? For the children. I had always been told that divorce was bad for children. I was afraid I would make a decision that would negatively affect them for the rest of their lives. But, in this moment I realized the abusive situation we all were living in was far worse than the possible negative effects of divorce. We had to find a way out.

This scenario, drawn from my own personal experience, is not as uncommon as one might think. People continue on in toxic or abusive marriages with the misconception that staying married will be best for their children. From my perspective as a single mother of 3 children who was in an emotionally abusive marriage, I have personally witnessed the positive effects that divorce can have on children. Especially, when there are cases of abuse both physical and emotional, or extreme contention within the home, divorce can have a positive effect on the children involved.

While I am only a witness to my own personal experience there has been significant research done on the topic of divorce and the effects, both

positive and negative, it has on children. I will draw on the expertise of Joliet (2011), Clark (2013), Amato (2010), Coleman, Glenn (2010) as well as others, and their extensive research about the effects of divorce on children. Divorce has had a bad stigma throughout the ages because of the effects it was thought to have on children. It's often been heard, "We stayed together for the children. As divorce rates have increased, and no-fault divorces have been implemented, the perceived damage of divorce on children has started to recede. Particularly, under certain circumstances where there is much discord or abuse, divorce has proven to be beneficial for children. A divorce can end the modeling of a bad relationship, create happier parents, and a healthier environment for everyone, including the children. Historically, divorce has been viewed as a negative marital option and in fact, up until the 1970s, divorce was fault based.

In other words, legally to get a divorce one spouse had to prove the other spouse executed a marital offense. This looked at as outcasts from a "broken-home," Olive, 2011). Research ensued to back up these negative conceptions of divorce on children. The problem was, much of the search failed to take into consideration the effects of the pre-divorce environment. Figure 1: Shows the long-term divorce rates from 1940 - 2012. It shows the dramatic increase in divorce rates when the no-fault divorce was written into law. Source: Divorce recession drop rebound, with the 2012 rate (2014).

Over time, as shown in the chart above, the no-fault divorce was legislated into law, and helped to eradicate this stigma (Olive, 2011). Divorce rates did rise dramatically until the early 1970s, and have since plateaued, or even

declined slightly. With this increase, people began to be more accepting of divorce. Recent studies are revealing that divorce can have a positive effect on children. Much of the result has to do with how the parents handle the divorce with their children,; therefore, the positive effects are not just limited to cases of abuse. As a result (of dispelling the negative divorce connotations), instead of divorce being taboo and frowned upon, people now view divorce as a second chance to be happy. Instead of being considered lost causes, children of divorce can now be seen as resilient and able to cope," said Jolliet, a partner at Randall & Sonnies, and family divorce attorney. With the "stay together for the sake of the children" mantra so ingrained into the ideals of society, the effects of these misconceptions of divorce still deter many from getting a divorce.

So much historical research was done showing how children suffered from divorce either academically, or emotionally, and society for years has accepted this thought process. Unfortunately, this causes people to stay in abusive marriages, or marriages with extreme discord, far longer than they should, not realizing that they may actually be hurting their children far more than helping them. Brenda Clark, a child psychologist ND member of the Canadian Pediatric Society said, "If there is a high level of conflict, children appear to be better off if the marriage ends and separation occurs. Research now shows that children who were exposed to marital conflict prior to the divorce, even in utter, were more likely to develop problems, emotionally and behaviorally (Coleman, & Glenn, 2010). There are abundant holes in past research that pointed at divorce as negatively affecting children's well-being, and pre-divorce environments were not taken into

consideration when making these assessments. Jolliet (2011) quotes sociologist Dry.

Lisa Stretching as saying, " Perhaps we should pay more attention to what happens to kids in the period leading up to parental divorce rather than directing all our efforts to helping children after the event occurs. " Children in highly dysfunctional families actually show a drop in the level of anti-social behavior they exhibit after a parental divorce Olive, 2011). Many children, especially in cases of abuse and domestic violence, report feeling a sense of relief after the divorce (Clark, 2013). There are many positives that can come from a divorce for children.

Divorce can end the modeling of a bad relationship. When children are constantly surrounded by unhappy parents who are always quarrelling they begin to believe this type of behavior is what a relationship is be argumentative as well in their personal relationships with others, both in and outside of the home. I saw this happen with my own children. Their father was an argumentative person, not just with me, but also with them. The rockier and more argumentative my relationship got with him, the more they fought with one another, and others around them.

My relationship with their father deteriorated to the point that the bickering between my children became almost incessant. They could not be around each other without fighting. When we were finally able to separate ourselves from their father, the level of fighting dropped significantly, almost immediately. So much so in fact, that other extended family members around us remarked about how different their behavior became after getting

out of that toxic situation. My children have each individually told me how much more relaxed they feel, and how happy they are to be out of that situation.

When parents are able to end a bad relationship, and turn their interaction into more positive ones, they are able to monitor what a healthy relationship looks like to their children (Jacob, 2014). Another interesting concept to explore is parents who are able to get out of a bad relationship and find happiness, often have better interactions with one another, and this attitude spills over to the children (Jacob, 2014). Attorney Steven R. Jacob states, " Although splitting up with your spouse is a traumatic experience, it's important to focus on the best interest of the children involved.

Their happiness can best be attained by both parents seeking their own individual happiness. This holds true whether that they be together or apart. I have seen first-hand how my own post- divorce happiness has had a great impact on my children. They have all said to me how much happier they are now. For example, the first Christmas after we left, my then 13 year old son, came up to me and told me it was the best vacation break he had ever had. We didn't go anywhere, or do anything extravagant, but he told me how nice it was to feel calm and happy without his father around.

Divorce can be what is best to create a positive environment in which to raise children. Divorce can ease the tension in a home, and relieve the household of unnecessary stresses that effect children (Jacob, 2014). My children tell me all the time how nice it is to feel relaxed now. Alleviating the stress of not knowing what their father might do to them has allowed

them to relax and come into their own. Having the ability to be relaxed has not only affected their behavior at home, it has positively affected their schoolwork, and all three are flourishing.

Not all marriages that end in divorce are a result of abuse, or high levels of discord. In fact, research shows that there's a sizable amount number that can be categorized as "good enough marriages" without much marital discord at all (Kim 2011). How parents handle divorce with regard to their children is especially important in these cases. If a child has been exposed to little, if any, marital conflict, parental separation can come as a shock, and when this occurs children appear to be worse off than before the separation (Clark 2013).

Oftentimes, children do experience a disruption to their well-being and have feelings of immediate distress during a parental divorce, but most reports show that after the dust settles from the divorce the majority of children settle into a normal development (Coleman & Glenn, 2010). Parents can avoid the negative effects of divorces on their children by learning how to co-parent in a positive way. "Research with effective discipline and limit-setting, is a powerful protective and resilience-promoting factor for children experiencing parental separation or divorce. (Clark, 2013, 2013). When parents put their differences aside and focus on the child's well-being, they are increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes on their children's well-being. Parents can also minimize or eliminate the effects of divorce by working on their interpersonal communication skills with one another, strengthening parent-child relationships, mainly minimizing limiting the

the routine changes in routine for the children, and creating an open environment in which children can discuss their feelings Olive 2011).

Going through a divorce is a difficult and emotional battle, and no divorce can really be categorized as a good divorce. " Today research has shown that one of the most important things divorcing parents can do is to educate themselves and understand how their actions along with the animosity they exhibit toward each other impacts their children in negative and destructive ways" Olive 2011).

If parents show hostility toward their ex-spouse, talk poorly about them in front of the children, argue and continue to have extreme conflict during and after the divorce process, they are going to have a negative impact on their children's emotional well-being. Research has shown that ongoing inter-parental conflict is one of the most damaging aspects of divorce (Clark 2013). If parents can get along and work together the impact on their children can be positive. It's important for parents to put aside their negative feelings toward one another, and put the needs of their children's first.

One effective way to do this is to develop a business-like approach to interacting with one another. Respecting one another, setting clear boundaries, and laying out ground rules for their interactions with regards to the children will all help parents to positively impact their children's well-being (Clark, 2013). Another way to create a positive impact on a child's well-being in association with divorce is to increase and nurture the parent-child relationship. Director of the Center for Family in Transition at Cortex Madder, California, Dry.

Judith Wallflowers, said " what makes a difference to a child of divorce is a much more butte, much more elusive issue of how that child perceives whether he is accepted or reject by his parents" Olive, 2011). When a child is able to feel that their relationship with their parents stays intact, despite the divorce, they continue to feel loved, respected, and maintain a positive self-image. When parents share custody of their children, they each have individual time with them, giving them the opportunity to engage in more effective parenting during their time with the child.

Parents who choose to utilize this time to strengthen their relationship with their children, and vive them undivided attention will allow their children to experience the full parenting of both parents Jacob 2014). Research has shown that good, effective parenting can quite possibly be the most important factor in determining a child's well-being after divorce (Coleman 2010). " In one long-term study, a good relationship with the custodial parent predicted fewer child behavior problems, better communication skills, better grades and higher ratings of adjustment (Clark 2013).

The parent-child relationship seems to affect a child so much that psychologists now UT more importance on the family relationship rather than the family structure in terms of the impact it has on a child's well-being Olive 2011). " Parent-child skills, positive communication, and low levels of conflict and negativity are consistently associated with fewer negative outcomes related to mentalhealthand with more positive outcomes related to social adaptation following a separation or divorce" (Clark 2013). When the routine

off child is constantly disrupted, they have a difficult time feeling settled and grounded.

When divorce transpires, inevitably disruption occurs in a child's day-to-day life. Divorce is often surrounded by stress, confusion, conflict, and disorientation (Clark 2013). If parents can work together to minimize these stresses, and their impact on their children, the children will be able to navigate through the divorce much easier. For a period of time, it was thought that equal Joint-custody (spending equal days in the month with each parent) was what was best for children, but research now shows that this causes too much disruption for the children, and negatively affected affects their emotional well-being.

In fact, one Norwegian study showed that the closer in proximity a non-resident father lived to his children, the worse off they were in terms of educational attainment. It was theorized that this was due to the child having to split time between the two households, causing too much disruption to the needed stability in the child's life. The study showed that if a father relocated, it sheltered the child not only from parental post-divorce conflict, but also created a more stable home environment (Kali 2011).

Now, this does not mean that all fathers should stay away from their children in an effort to keep the disruption to their lives at bay. Simply, it means that careful consideration should be made, and reflection on the children's needs when determining the best way to create a stable environment for the children. Children adjust best to their post-divorce environments if there is as little disruption as possible to their schedules, activities, and social lives. The

final parental consideration for positively affecting children of divorce is to create an open line of communication between parents and children.

When a child feels comfortable talking about their frustrations, fears, or emotions about the divorce, they are able to maintain a normal sense of well-being (Olive, 2011). While parents are in the divorce stage, children are more likely to feel loneliness, anxiety, sadness, and as a result lower self-esteem (Kim, 2011). If these children feel that it is safe for them to speak with their parents about these feelings, they can work together to get through them, and minimize their effects.

It is imperative that parents communicate well and frequently with their children, and openly discuss their love and devotion to the child. It is important that children learn to understand it is normal to have a myriad of feelings about their own experience with the divorce. Learning to cope with these feelings can be a challenge for both the parent and the child (Clark 2013). There are many group support programs that have shown to be effective in helping both parents and children through the emotions of divorce. Group support helps reduce children's sense of isolation, clarifies misconceptions, and teaches how to problem- solve and communicate more effectively with parents" (Clark, 2013). Divorce should not be taken lightly, and while it can have negative effects on children, it certainly doesn't have to be that way. There are some cases, especially when abuse or domestic violence is involved, when divorce is the best solution to an undesirable situation. It can redirect a child from a negative to a positive path of mental well- the parents are divorced.

Getting children out of these situations actually drastically increases their ability to attain positive mental and physical well-being. In non-abusive, but highly dysfunctional marriages, parents have the ability to change their negative behavior towards each other during, and after the divorce, alleviating the stress of divorce on the children. When parents can create a better emotional environment for children after divorce, much of the negative effects of divorce dissipate, and the children can recover and go on to be normal, healthy adults.

If you would like to learn more find out more about the effects of divorce on children, or if you have questions about my own personal experiences being in an emotionally abusive marriage, and being able to get out, email me at Com. No abusive relationship is worth staying in for the sake of the children. If you find yourself in this situation, have the courage to get out. You will be better off for it, and our children will thank you for being strong enough to get them out of a terrible environment. As shown that the quality of parenting, as defined by warmth and nurture along (2013) When parents put their differences aside and focus on the child's well-being they are increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes on their children's well-being. " The quality of parent-child relationships is an important protective factor that predicts the long-term impact of separation and divorce on children. " (Clark, 2014) Also, if parents focus on their relationship with the child, putting the well-being of the child first, the child will feel accepted.