



Your

# Catholic Coach

Be transformed! Rom 12:1-2

## how to help your kids

You're divorced . . . and no matter the cause or who felt they had to leave, or how "better" things may be afterward, your children took a HUGE HIT that will follow them into adulthood.

It will damage their ability to trust, create fear in relationships, and even worse effects that may take years to manifest and heal. But most parents already know that, and it is another deep grief of the divorce.

### **Many of you did what you believed you had to do**

There should be no shame heaped upon you for following an informed conscience. But you still need to be aware of what you can do moving forward.

Parenting is a lifetime job, and often difficult even with an intact and healthy marriage. The following list is only a quick reference to get you started.

*DO pray first.* Don't leave prayer as a last resort.

*DON'T panic.* An anxious parent can make the kids anxious. With an act of the will, trust God even if you don't feel like it.

*DO accept that the perfect childhood is not going to happen--your children are already wounded. You, and they, will need to grieve that. But just as Christ's wounds brought great good, and his light shines through his scars, the same can happen for you and your*

children over time and with grace. Eventually, fruits of these healed wounds can be maturity, wisdom, understanding, compassion, kindness, and more.

*DO think of them FIRST* when it comes to their mental, spiritual, emotional, sexual, social, and financial welfare.

*DO take care of yourself FIRST* when possible and appropriate: get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, get counseling. When YOU are stable, they can lean on you. When you're still a mess, it affects them.

*DO maintain as much consistency as possible* in daily schedules, bedtimes, curfews, routine, and discipline. Don't let them start getting away with murder (disrespect, disobedience, etc.) just because of the divorce. Keep going to weekly Mass, saying prayers when you can, and reminding them God has his loving eye and his protective hands on them all.

*DO learn, and teach the kids, that God is not a puppet master* to take away problems and pain. He didn't remove the cross from Jesus--but he made sure even greater good came from it. After a divorce, that's our promise, too. Help them carry the cross.

*DO listen without judgment and criticism.* Create a place where they can speak honestly without shame. Be curious and ask them what they feel, what they need, and how you can help.

*DON'T try to keep doing everything to be the "good" parent;* you'll exhaust yourself and exasperate everyone else. Get help. If you haven't already, teach THEM to clean their rooms, do their own laundry, make dinner, do dishes, take care of the trash, lawn and more. It doesn't have to be perfect. Don't rob your children of the joys of maturity and feeling like part of the "team" because you think they can't do it (right).

*DO let go of everything on your (and their) calendars that is not necessary.* It doesn't mean that a few months or years later you can't add things back in. Cut back on excessive school programs

and activities. We live in a culture of often-addictive busyness that stunts emotional and spiritual growth.

*DON'T try to be the perfect parent (Disneyland Mom or Dad) , giving them whatever they want, so they love YOU more. You'll only set them up to expect the world to cater to them and to be selfish and unhappy young people. And your credit card debt will be huge!*

*DON'T badmouth the other parent or share inappropriate information. They don't need to know about the money, the courts, the arguments, or any other adult subject matter--including the details of your marriage and divorce.*

*DO share in age-appropriate ways what is happening in general: we are having a big problem here, not sure how it will all work out, but it WILL, and you will always have two parents who love you, a home, and just enough of what you need.*

*DO encourage your children to open up; don't be upset that they are upset, just listen, affirm, encourage, and validate. Make plenty of time for talk, but don't force them. With their basic questions already answered, it may be that you are the one who really wants to talk. Call a friend.*

*DON'T make your child your surrogate "spouse", an emotional confidante, 'best friend', constant social companion, or in-house therapist. These have damaging and far-reaching negative consequences. They need you to be their parent even if they like the 'special attention' they are getting.*

*DO honor the court-appointed visitation schedule. Pay your child support on time and in full. Don't gouge the other parent in court. Don't spend years trying to get perfect justice; at some point trust God and let it go. Be an example to your children of refusing to stay engaged in bitter battles.*

*DON'T delay getting professional or medical help for yourself or your kids when you think it could help.*

*DON'T start dating or bringing dates home too soon (and never, ever before you have an annulment!). Don't try to replace a parent and blend families without slow, extremely careful, and proper preparation.*

No civil divorce and Church annulment yet? No dating. You don't have the fullness of the "gift-of-self" to give anyone right now. Don't be selfish. Kids will bond with new people and when the new person leaves, the cycle of rejection and "divorce" will go deeper and bring more damage. Focus on your recovery and theirs for at least a year or maybe even much longer.

*DO see this as a time for growing in faith.* Listen to Catholic radio; watch Catholic TV; rent better movies and talk about the good v. evil themes. Read good books. Share what you are learning with your children in ways they can understand.

*DO remember that nothing stays the same for very long,* Whatever is hurtful and seems hopeless now can and probably will change.

*DO get professional counseling for your kids if necessary.* Even if they are adults; you can always agree to sit in on some healing sessions with them.

## **Look for the good that can come from divorce**

Many parents attest that divorce forced them to grow up and take responsibilities they had avoided, and to get their priorities in right order. They have become much better and wiser parents.

Give thanks to God; there still may be long years of healing and more hell to pay but. Ultimately, *the best is yet to come.*

There's more! Check out the **Common Questions** download on this website.

*We're only separated...Now what?  
Why do I hurt so much?*

*Why I am I taking longer to heal than others?  
What can I do to feel better?  
Where can I go for help?  
If God is good, why did He allow this divorce?  
I just can't forgive; is that wrong?  
I have so much guilt. What can I do?  
I don't trust the Church, and I haven't been to Mass for years...  
Where can I learn more about Catholicism?  
I'm furious, what can I do with this anger?  
How do I help my kids?  
More...*

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Do you need help with:

- Processing your emotions?
- Wondering about the future?
- Helping the kids?
- Dealing with an ex?
- Dating right this time?

*Get the wise, experienced, support of a Catholic Coach!*

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