

Want to Help Your Children in a Divorce? Avoid These 3 Things

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When we are going through a divorce, it is often at the forefront of our minds to want to protect and care for our children. Because it's an emotional process, and when there are not real issues of safety, there are times when we try to comfort our children in ways that may be less helpful than we think.

Here are three things to avoid during the process:

1. **Telling our children how much we miss them.** When a child is with the other parent, they inevitably worry about us. If we tell the child how much we miss them or how sad we are that they are not with us, it only reinforces the child's fear and sadness. It's usually better to talk the child about fun things they are doing with the other parent, events they can look forward to during their time, and generally keeping the conversations light and easy. It's not a simple process, but in the end, a child who feels that they can love both of their parents and be supported, is the best outcome.
2. **Asking the child to convey information.** When we are trying to avoid conflict with the other parent, it's tempting to try to keep communication to the bare minimum. But because information has to be conveyed to the other parent, that often means that one parent will ask a child to "tell the other parent" something. Putting the child directly in the middle like this is not only uncomfortable for the child, but can be damaging to your relationship with both your child and the other parent. Children don't want to take sides and they don't want to be in the middle of the divorce; they have their own feelings, concerns, and emotions to process. Being an adult means communicating with the other parent respectfully and cordially, and keeping the children out of the process.

3. **Not supporting the child's relationships with their families.** Children know that they belong to two families: Mom's and Dad's. When a divorce is going on, a child may fear losing out on relationships that have been important to them in the past. When other relatives are in town, or there are special family events going on, allow your child the ability to participate, even if it is on your time. Ask for make-up time, ask for accommodation for your own family, but remember that a child has family on both sides, and they should be able to feel connected to those relatives who provide them additional support and love.

For any questions regarding family law matters, please contact one of the family law attorneys at Sandberg Phoenix.