Breaking the News: Telling Your Children About an Impending Divorce

Guest blogger Lee Anne Hartwell, *a licensed clinical social worker, joins Two Peds in a Pod® with advice on how to tell your children about divorce.*

Telling your children about the decision to divorce is one of the most agonizing tasks parents face as they navigate the divorce and separation process. How do you maintain focus on the best interests of the children while you are suffering tremendous emotional upheaval?

Following these guidelines can keep you on track and lay the foundation for creating a co-parent team that gives your children the security and support they need as the family situation changes.

*Work together as a couple to develop a plan of what is appropriate to share with your children. But above all else, children need to hear that they are not at fault for your failed marriage.

* Tell your children about your divorce together, in the comfort of their own home and during a relaxed family time.

*Convey to your children your love and ongoing assurance that their needs are important.

*Communicate that as their parents you will be working together to make the transition as smooth as possible. Explain the process of determining visitation, custody, and changes in their living situation. Avoid placing major decisions on their

shoulders.

*Give your children space and time to ask questions and to share their reactions. Validate their feelings. Answer their questions as factually as you can and with an eye to keeping details of marital struggles separate. Children may also need time to themselves after hearing the news.

Preparation can go a long way to helping all members of the family adjust to this challenging time. Oftentimes, when parents are ending their own relationship, seeking the guidance of trained professionals can be instrumental in giving everyone in the family much needed support and direction.

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