



[Forgot your password?](#)

[Register now »](#)

Username

- [Preschools](#)
- [Camps & Classes](#)
- [City Guides](#)
- [Activities](#)
- [Books, Toys & More](#)
- [Savvy Parenting](#)
- [My Child's Development](#)
- Coming Soon
- My Child's Journal

Savvy Parenting

[Home](#) > [Savvy Parenting](#) > [Being Savvy](#) > Understanding, Talking About And Living Well After Divorce

Searching for the right preschool?

Find preschools, camps, activities and more!

Search:



The Inspired

- [All About Me and Mine](#)
- [Escapes, Real and Imagined](#)
- [Life is Art: Art is Life](#)
- [It's Easy Being Green](#)
- [Down by the Shore](#)
- [Nurturing Imagination](#)
- [The Social Life of Preschoolers](#)
- [The Delights of Reading](#)
- [Food, Glorious Food!](#)
- [Resolutions and Reflections](#)
- [Seasons and Celebrations](#)
- [Celebrating Rituals](#)
- [Wise Words](#)
- [What Do People Do All Day?](#)

The Basics

- [Tough Subjects](#)
- [Friends and Friendship](#)
- [Learning](#)
 - [Physical Activity](#)
 - [Math](#)
 - [Music](#)

- [Reading](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Imaginative Play](#)
- [Art](#)
- [Language](#)
- [The Body](#)
- [Siblings: Friends or Foes](#)
- [Sleeping 101](#)
- [Whining, Wailing and Other Behavior Challenges](#)
- [Being a Savvy Parent](#)
 - [Parenting Choices](#)
 - [Education Decisions](#)

Add Your Review of:

- [Your Child's Preschool](#)
- [Camps and Classes](#)
- [Books and Toys](#)

Advertisement



In-Depth Preschool Ratings and Reviews for:

- [All Cities](#)
- [Austin Preschools](#)
- [Berkeley & Oakland Preschools](#)
- [Boston Preschools](#)
- [Chicago Preschools](#)
- [Dallas Area Preschools](#)
- [Los Angeles \(West LA\) Preschools](#)
- [Los Angeles \(San Gabriel Valley\) Preschools](#)
- [NYC & Brooklyn Preschools](#)
- [San Diego North County Preschools](#)
- [San Francisco Preschools](#)
- [San Jose Preschools](#)

- [Seattle Preschools](#)

Being Savvy Today

May 2009: "Tough Subjects"

[« Previous Article](#)

[Next Article »](#)

Understanding, Talking About and Living Well after Divorce

May 13, 2009

by [Amy Rees](#)

Divorce is a foundation-shaking event for young children -- that's the truth of the matter. But divorce is also a part of modern parenting, and census statistics make it clear that's a constant in our world as well. With an eye toward taking the topic both as seriously and as practically as it deserves to be taken, we have identified some ways to be Savvy about an undeniably sad situation. Ask anyone who lives in an earthquake zone: foundations can be shaken and emerge strong.

In all likelihood, you didn't know any highly evolved, truly amicable divorced parents when you were growing up. In all likelihood, your child will know a happy handful of them. We stage-whispered "divorce" in a tone reserved otherwise only for "cancer" and thought *Kramer vs. Kramer* was a documentary. Instead, our kids may blithely say "she's with her other family this weekend." Sounds like progress to us.

Use Your Words -- But Different Words

In [Mom's House, Dad's House](#), Isolina Ricci, Ph.D., gives persuasive treatment to the idea that a shift in language and in certain assumptions makes a huge difference in bringing about a more peaceful reality for kids of divorced families. Ricci's book is excellent for anyone going through this watershed event in her own family, and it should also be required reading for anyone whose friend (or whose child's friend) is dealing with divorce. The more carefully chosen language that she advocates is one that we've tried to adopt. It's especially helpful with the littlest kids, whose worldview is framed by the way these concepts are first presented. Ricci helps parents explain that their marriage "ended," as if its running its course was a natural thing. Turning the word over again in our minds and our conversations reminds us that "ended" is a much more calming word than "broke up," "left," and all the other verbs that paved the road to what we dramatically called "Splitsville." That shouldn't be any child's address.

Update Your Definition of a Family

So, what is it that you have after a marriage has ended?

Ricci powerfully claims you have a family. Perhaps you have two of them, but you certainly didn't lose (or "break up") your family in the process. Is it changed? Irrevocably. But Ricci insists that if you believe you have a family, then you have one, all traditional definitions aside. She takes a very, very long-term view of how you are all going to end up after a divorce, and again she uses language to create her new reality, preferring "my children's mother/father" to "my ex" and putting the explanation that "they are with their other family" or "at their other house" into use early and often.

Be Aware of Fear and Fault, Often Wildly Imagined

Young kids, from toddlers to preteens, struggle with the reality of divorce and the change it imposes on what they had assumed was unchangeable. No matter how seemingly well (or matter-of-factly or whatever we mean by "well") they take the news, they are certain to fall into the twin traps of fear and fault. And not just fear and fault, but fear and fault as conjured by the almost magical thinking of a preschooler's mind, for example. The same ease in accepting Santa Claus in spite of all the improbabilities wreaks havoc in an understanding of what role a child played in the end of his parents' marriage -- and what scary impossibilities are sure to happen next! The magnificent Sandcastles program vividly explains the kinds of answers children offer, and it gives parents useful, example-filled scripts and quotes and tools to address them. M. Gary Neuman adapted his Sandcastles program from family courts to the general public in [Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way](#). There is an entire chapter on "reading" a child's art during a time of family stress -- this is an essential book for divorcing parents (or close friends or relatives) if ever there were one.

Be Practical

When you're the one going through it, divorce clouds your thinking. Making decisions afterwards is as emotionally fraught as the big decisions we are counseled to avoid in the first year after a death, except divorce also forces a number of those decisions. In [How to Parent with Your Ex](#) (not a great word, though...), Brette McWhorter Sember provides a hyper-practical guide to navigating the early (and later) days after a divorce, and she

does so with a clever volume that is really two books in one, for both the main residential and non-residential parents. (Even these categories are being stretched as kids more easily glide between houses for a week-on, week-off rotation, or even split weeks that allow both parents to participate fully in schooling and daily life for the children. But Sember's book remains useful, in any framework.) Sember gets down the nitty-gritty of a packing list for what travels with a child -- and what remains, in duplicate, at both homes. A packing list! Now this is useful for a teary parent! And the two books in one literally keep you and your child's other parent on the same page -- or at least within the covers of the same book!

If Possible, Work It Out Before It Comes to This

We've given you some places to start to ensure the members of your divorced family thrive. To give your own marriage the best chance to thrive before these suggestions come into play, talk to your friends and your family. See what they do to make it through hard times. We find all sorts of practical suggestions (regular date nights) and metaphysical perspective (he won't change, you've got to accept it and find a way to love it) from sources as varied as friends in the pick-up line at preschool to talking to a long-married grandparent. If you're looking for a way to read your way to greater insight, Dr. Aaron T. Beck's [Love Is Never Enough](#) is wise. Beck is a highly respected physician, and his work is often placed in the canon of psychiatric texts that truly help explain human actions (and reactions) and how to change them. Changing yourself before everyone has to change in a divorce? Now that sounds Savvy!

[Comment\(0\)](#)  [Share](#)  [Bookmark](#)  [RSS](#) 

Add Your Comments

Your name:

Your email or web site address (optional):

Your comments:

HTML is not allowed in comments. Plain text only, please.

ADD MY COMMENT

Get Savvy About...



[Down by the Shore Art](#)



[Imaginative Play](#)



[Physical Activity](#)



[Science](#)



[Music](#)

Advertisement



Blogs We Read

- [CityMama](#)
- [The Wondershop](#)
- [Parent Hacks](#)
- [Celebrate Green](#)
- [Design Mom](#)
- [The Happiness Project](#)
- [Vintage Kids' Books My Kid Loves](#)
- [Eco Child's Play](#)
- [Mindful Momma](#)
- [Mmm... That's Good!](#)
- [Kirtsy](#)
- [one plus two](#)
- [Nonlinear Girl](#)
- [Gruppie Girl](#)
- [Work It, Mom](#)
- [Cookie Magazine's Daily Find](#)
- [MOMformation](#)
- [Follow The Savvy Source on Twitter](#)

Advertisement



Take Our Expert Quiz



how is your toddler or preschooler progressing developmentally?

[TAKE OUR EXPERT QUIZ NOW](#)

[Preschools](#) [Activities](#) [Savvy Parenting Books, Toys & More](#) [My Child's Development](#)

[About Us](#) [Feedback](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Comment Policy](#) [News](#) [Blog](#) [Partners](#) [Sitemap](#)

© Savvy Source for Parents 2006 - 2008