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Why a Good Divorce Is Better Than a Bad Marriage for Kids

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Anyone who is considering divorce knows that there is a lot of research demonstrating that divorce is difficult for children. If you're considering divorce or in the process of getting one it can seem as though

researchers are shaking their fingers at you, predicting the worst for your child. As a former divorce attorney, mediator, and Law Guardian, I worked with families going through divorce as well as those who returned to court for updates and changes to their parenting plans. I've also seen acquaintances, friends, and family members who have stayed together for the sake of the children. It's time someone stood up and spoke the truth. While there is no question that divorce is hard for kids, it is a far cry better than raising your children in a violent, abusive, angry, or deeply resentful marriage.

If you stay married for the sake of your children, you expose them to daily arguments, negative undercurrents, shouting, possible violence, and an atmosphere that is in no way calm and peaceful. This has a huge impact on your child. When parents stay in a bad marriage, kids have to cope with the fall out from a never ending cycle of disputes, resentment, sadness, and even hate. A bad marriage is an open wound that can never heal as the scab is picked off again and again no matter how hard the parents try to keep things together for the sake of the kids. Children live in a volatile environment, which even if it is not violent, it is not nurturing and loving.

While the research is clear that divorce does have an impact on children, it fails to take into account the permanent emotional damage children suffer when they stay in one home with parents who can't get along. A divorce frees everyone from this environment and offers many benefits to children:

- Two homes where there is no constant arguing. This allows kids to just be kids without having to work around the complex negative emotions present in a conflict-filled home. Yes, having two homes is a change. It's not always perfect but two homes without fighting is almost always better than one filled with arguments and marital tension.



- A calmer emotional baseline. Things are complicated in the months following divorce, but most families get through this transition and find a new normal. Children are no longer riding the waves of their parents' relationship on a daily basis. Things settle down and everyone is calmer and less combative.

- Happy parents. The benefits of this are enormous. Happy people are better parents. Happy people create happy environments. Happiness rubs off on children. While it takes time to find your equilibrium after divorcing, it does happen for most people and is certainly a better outcome than living unhappily for years in a difficult marriage.

- Children learn that compromise matters. When they see their parents co-parenting and working through the issues in a divorce, children learn that compromise is an important and effective skill. While no divorce is without challenges, getting through it shows your child how to work through hard times to achieve a brighter future. Parents who choose to mediate their divorce show their children that working together to find a solution is preferable to fighting against each other.

- Parents who choose personal happiness teach their kids to do the same. While putting your kids first is often held up as the gold standard of parenting, deciding that your personal happiness is more important than having a nuclear family under one roof sends a powerful message to your children. It shows them that everyone deserves to be happy and that happiness is an important consideration in your life plan.

- Divorced parents can find their parenting mojo after divorce. This isn't guaranteed, but if you have a reasonable parenting plan and are able to cooperate, each parent develops a unique parenting style from the ongoing one-on-one time with the children.

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