

Catholic Charities
Counseling Services
Support for Separated and Divorced
1276 University Ave, St. Paul, MN 55104



Contains Dated Material

Supported through private contributions, United Way and Annual Catholic Appeal. Accredited by Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children.

Catholic Charities' Counseling Services Support for Separated and Divorced include information and referral, free newsletter, support group facilitator training, short-term counseling, divorce education, annual fall conference, pre-marriage seminar for second marriages and assistance to parishes.

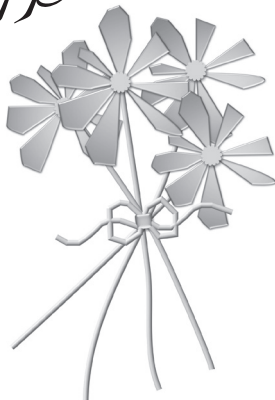
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Gatherings is published four times a year.

For information, name and address updates or to be put on the mailing list call **651-647-3126** or e-mail: separated.divorced@cctwincities.org
www.cctwincities.org



Happy Easter!



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Spare Children the Grief (as much as possible)

By Stacy D. Phillips

If you are one of those divorced persons who has a contentious relationship with your ex-spouse, be careful that you don't let it impact the mental well-being of the children you parent together.

Unfortunately, children are almost always victims when it comes to divorce. They are helpless victims who love both parents, and the last thing they need is to feel the tension and acrimony between the two people they love the most. Nor do they need to feel they



Stacy D. Phillips

feeling they must pit one parent against the other.

Whenever I talk to the children of parents who are involved

in a custody battle, for example, or simply caught between Mom and Dad as they fight over visitation matters, I feel a tremendous sadness. I often wish that parents could simply walk in their children's shoes during just one of those inappropriate incidents. Then they could feel the stress and discomfort their children experience.

I have a checklist of what I think are appropriate boundaries for parents who don't agree and who don't get along with each other. I take special care and as much time as necessary with my clients to help them with a plan to handle difficult moments with their ex-spouse, especially situations that directly affect the children.

The following are my suggestions for sparing the children any more grief than necessary:

1. Never, and I mean never, bad-mouth your ex-spouse in front of the children.

Despite what a louse you may think your ex-spouse is, that person is still your child's parent. As such, it's traumatic each time a child hears one parent berate the other. Psychologists and marriage and family counselors tell us that the children tend to instinctively feel that if something is wrong with one or the other parent, then something must be wrong with them. Save your angry remarks for your therapist, or vent your feelings and opinions to a trusted friend.

2. Never argue in front of the children.

They tend to feel anxious and embarrassed and will feel torn between their allegiance to each parent.

3. Work out schedules and important arrangements ahead of time.

That is, well in advance, so there is no confusion or uncertainty for the children. Make sure agreed upon visitation times—and I mean specific times—are in writing. This way you can justifiably take your complaints to your attorney, a court mediator or a judge. Better to take your grievances there than to display them to your ex-spouse in front of the children. If your ex-spouse is tough to deal with, he or she may not be the type with whom you can have an open-ended relationship when it comes to matters that involve the children. Plan ahead carefully so both you

Suggested Web Sites

- nacsdc.org
- religiousresources.org/directory/cat.php?cat_id=82
- enotalone.com/22-1
- divorcecare.com
- divorcerecovery101.com/site_map
- divorcesupport.com/divorce/Articles-4
- divorcecare.com
- mediate.com/fam
- drcri.net/divorce-articles
- divorcemag.com/articles/Health_Well_Being/how-to-handle-your-emotions
- divorcesupport.about.com/od/copingduringdivorce/u/coping_divorce1

Unfortunately, children are almost always victims when it comes to divorce

must choose one parent over the other. But I find that couples are so caught up in their anger, need for control or bitterness that they don't fully realize how their behavior (their unkind words and actions toward each other) can affect their children who are often left

Spare Children the Grief

Continued from page 1

and the children can feel a sense of what to reasonably expect.

4. Actions speak louder than words.

If you think you and your children are being treated disrespectfully by your ex-spouse, try to set a positive example by not reacting negatively to such behavior. Take satisfaction in knowing that your children will eventually figure out which parent is the good guy and which is not. Children are smart. They know what is and what is not appropriate behavior. In the long run your children will have tremendous respect for the parent who takes the high road.

5. Pay close attention to how your children are feeling.

This is especially true when they see the two of you together. Your body language, tone of voice and overall demeanor can give you away if you're feeling hostile or resentful. Focus on the children, not on your ex-spouse. If you notice that the children feel noticeably uncomfortable when you encounter your ex-spouse, encourage them to talk about their feelings and offer them the support of a therapist. Children often need an outside advocate to help them deal with their polarized or uncomfortable feelings about mom and dad.

6. If tensions are really high between you and your ex-spouse, seek assistance.

See if you can arrange to have the children dropped off and picked up at the home or office of a neutral party when the need arises. Sometimes it's better for the children not to be in the company of both parents if the vibe is

bad. This solution gives the children and quite possibly you and your ex-spouse fewer reminders to stir up negative feelings.

I'm certain, as a loving parent, you always want to protect the peace of mind and well-being of your children. Just know that being the bigger person, whether it means being more flexible with the visitation schedule or biting your tongue when you want to sound

off at what you think is unfair, will pay more dividends in the long run. For starters, you'll take great pride in showing your ex-spouse that he or she can no longer push your buttons.

Stacy Phillips is a seasoned family law attorney with the Phillips, Lerner, Lauzon & Jamra, LLP law office of Los Angeles, CA. She is also a member of the Advisory Board for the Divorce Magazine. She can be contacted at sdpdissoqueen@plljlaw.com.

SPEAKERS WHO MAY INTEREST YOU

Call the phone number to confirm the speaker for the evening.

CHURCH OF ST. TIMOTHY

707 89th Ave. NE, Blaine, MN 55434
763-784-1329, 7-8:30 p.m.

March 8, 2010

Linda Cherek, "Life Transitions: An Opportunity for Transformation"

March 15, 2010

Henry Cloud & John Townsend
DVD: "Myths About Boundaries"

March 22, 2010

Henry Cloud & John Townsend
DVD: "Boundaries: A Course of Recovery"

March 29, 2010

Henry Cloud & John Townsend
DVD: "Resistance to Boundaries"

April 12, 2010

Henry Cloud & John Townsend
DVD: "Boundaries and Yardsticks"

April 19, 2010

John Townsend, DVD: "Button Pushers--The Inside Scoop--Part 1"

April 26, 2010

John Townsend, DVD: "Button Pushers--The Inside Scoop--Part 2"

May 3, 2010

John Townsend, DVD: "Button Pushers--Why Working On Button Pushers Hasn't Worked--Part 1"

May 10, 2010

Shawn Phillips, "Tearsoup"

May 17, 2010

John Townsend, DVD: "Button Pushers--Why Working On Button Pushers Hasn't Worked--Part 2"

May 24, 2010

John Townsend, "Button Pushers--God, Life, and Your Stance--PART 1"

ST. THOMAS BECKET

4455 S. Robert Tr., Eagan, MN 55123
651-683-9808, 7-8 p.m.

March 1, 2010

Deacon Rich Klish, "Annulment Process"

March 15, 2010

Adaire Lassonde, SSND, LICSW, "Moving Forward"

CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK

6820 St. Patrick Lane, Edina, MN 55439
952-941-3164, 7-9 p.m.

APRIL 19, 2010

Carrie Kemp, "Embracing Change"

APRIL 16, 2010

Carrie Kemp, "Anger and Conflict"

MAY 3, 2010

Carrie Kemp, "Spirituality is NOT Your Average Religion"

PARISH SUPPORT GROUPS

Call the contact person for more information.

MINNEAPOLIS AND SUBURBS Epiphany, Coon Rapids

Kathleen Howland, 763-862-4347

St. Timothy, Blaine

Shawn Phillips, 763-784-1329

St. Vincent De Paul, Brooklyn Park

Okey Anyanwu, 763-425-2210 x417

St. Michael, St. Michael

Deacon Greg Steele, 763 263-2450, or 612-219-9088.

St. Wenceslaus, New Prague

Deacon Bob Wagner, 952-758-3225

St. Mary, Shakopee

Sr. Antonice, 952-445-1319

Catholic Charities, St. Cloud

Caritas Family Services, 320-529-0427

ST. PAUL AND SUBURBS

Holy Spirit, St. Paul

Rich Greiner 651-698-3353 x247
sepdv@holy-spirit.org

Sagrado Corazon de Jesus, Sacred Heart, St. Paul

(Spanish Speaking)
Luz Marina Amaya, 651-770-0059

St. Rose of Lima, Roseville

Marie Winn, 651-357-1202

Guardian Angels, Lake Elmo

Deacon Terry Beer, 651-738-2223 x133

St. Thomas Becket, Eagan

Karen Maza, 651-683-9808
Sandy Williams, 651-454-2079 x2220

St. Joseph, Red Wing

Dar Reeck, 651-388-1133

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Hastings

Mary Ellen Kenney, 651-437-4254 x227

Reminder: Any changes, please call the Office for Separated and Divorced at 651-647-3126.

How Transitions Affect Your Spiritual Health

In this retreat you will have time to focus on yourself and learn new ways to approach transitions so that life can feel more 'normal.' Adaire Lassonde is a School Sister of Notre Dame serving in her 24th year as the Program Specialist of Support for Separated and Divorced of Catholic Charities.



Adaire Lassonde

April 17, 2010, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Assisi Heights Spirituality Center
1001 14th Street NW Suite 100, Rochester, MN 55901

\$55 includes lunch. Pre-registration is required by April 9. Contact Carol Marie Hemish, SSND, Coordinator of AHSC, at 507-280-2195 or carolmarie.hemish@mycleanwave.net

Healing Resentments and Moving On A Presentation by Earnie Larsen

"Forgiveness work" can only begin when we realize we have as much right to serenity and happiness as we do to our righteous anger. It is the next leg of the journey, the one that leads from anger to forgiveness, that ends in the garden of serenity.



Earnie Larsen

May 8, 2010, 9 a.m. to noon
St. John the Baptist Church
835 2nd Ave NW, New Brighton, MN

\$20 at the door, no pre-registrations. Scholarships available. Call 651-647-3126.

Here's a Tip...

If you are going through a divorce and you are a parent, attend a skill-based parent-education class. In fact, it is mandatory in some states. Few parents realize the benefit of parent education until they are actually in such a class. Profound insight and considerable research have taken place on how to make family relationships work well. Your family conflict can be resolved or avoided altogether with these advanced skills.

"Avoid the common tendency to feel like a victim and blame the other parent for your divorce, as it makes the divorce much more difficult on you and your children. Instead, develop better skills, such as effective communication techniques, win-win problem-solving methods and promoting (not destroying) self-esteem. When you know better, you will do better!"

— JAYNE A. MAJOR, PH.D., PARENT EDUCATOR, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Find local parent education programs by going online at: www.ctwincities.org/office_separated_divorced. Click on "resources."