



## **Talk some, listen more.**

**Family connection starts with conversation.**

WHAT DO YOU MEAN I AM NOT COMMUNICATING? I AM YELLING AS LOUD AS I CAN!

Communication is a natural part of the human experience and yet it is amazing it does not come more naturally to people. In fact we humans spend enormous amounts of time and money to learn how to communicate effectively with our kids, our friends, our bosses, even with ourselves. More puzzling we seem to use our poorest communication skills with the ones we love most when they need us most, like when families experience divorce.

Divorce is the ending of a marital relationship between parents and a transitional time for children. Divorce does not have to have long-term negative effects on children, but it often does. The impact on the children is a direct result of how parents choose to communicate with each other and the children. Children are more likely to do poorly socially, and academically, and experience difficulties into their adult lives when parents use conflict centered communication styles. Children are most severely damaged when parents cannot separate the conflict in their marital relationship from their parental role. The good news is when parents use positive communication styles and keep the marital issues away from the children there is no measurable difference between children who have experienced divorce and those who have not.

Following these simple steps to developing a positive communication style can help parents protect their children from the negative effects of divorce.

**All communication should be focused around the children and their needs.**

Children should not be a part of nor aware of any adult discussion such as child support, visitation, court dates, or reasons for the divorce.

**Your children are not messengers, spies, or your personal support system.**

It may seem a convenient way to share info or avoid conflict but sending messages to your ex through your child places the child in the middle and causes them stress and confusion.

**Show respect and support to your children's parent.**

The greatest gift you can give your child is the security of two competent parents. Your ex will always be your child's parent so treat them with respect and support them in their efforts to be a good parent without judgment or interference.

**Seek out information and support to help you process your own feelings so they do not impact your children.** Divorce can be a very emotional time for parents and there are many resources available to help parents to keep their issues from becoming their children's issues.

**Talk to your children.**

Reassure your children they are loved and they can count on you to be there for them. Let them know divorce is an end to a marriage but only a transition for the family.

**Listen to your children.** Divorce is like a death and grieving is a process that takes time. Give your children the space and permission to talk about their feelings, the good, the bad, and the ugly, and just be there to listen.

For more information about how to develop positive communication to help you, your child, and your family through divorce visit <http://www.madisonct.org/myfs/>.

Barb Baycroft provides Children's Mental Health Services and Parent Support Counseling to families along the Connecticut Shoreline. She can be reached at (203) 747-0397 or [barb.baycroft@gmail.com](mailto:barb.baycroft@gmail.com) . Madison residents can access her services through Madison Youth & Family Services at (203) 245-5645