The Big D: Divorce Comes to the School

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Complications

• Communication with parents
• Transition between homes
• Homework
• Parent meetings
• Classroom teacher in the middle
• Emotional needs of students
Interventions in School

• Consultation with Teachers and Parents
  – Tips for Parents

• Individual counseling
  – To help with academic needs
  – To supplement outside therapy

• Group counseling
  – To feel as though they are not the “only” ones
  – Psychoeducational in nature
Stages of Divorce

1. Increasing Marital Conflict -> One parent initiates marital separation
2. Transitional stage -> Families attempt to reorganize lives in new ways
3. Family reaches a fairly stable equilibrium -> Living and school arrangements are established

(Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1998 in Lowenstein, 2006)
# Impact At Developmental Ages

(Lowenstein, 2006, p. 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Separation issues</th>
<th>Signs of Distress</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>-Developing peer relationships</td>
<td>-May experience loss of contact with parent as abandonment</td>
<td>-Overt signs of grief</td>
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<td>-Moral development progressing</td>
<td>-May feel responsible for separation</td>
<td>-Feelings of abandonment &amp; rejection</td>
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<td>-Anxious about basic needs being met</td>
<td>-Changes in eating &amp; sleeping</td>
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<td>-Behavioral problems</td>
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<td>-Loyalty conflicts</td>
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<td>-May try to take on role of departing parent</td>
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<td>9-12</td>
<td>-Increased awareness of self</td>
<td>-Angry about separation</td>
<td>-Intense anger</td>
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<td>-Tries to fit in with peers</td>
<td>-May feel responsible for separation</td>
<td>-Physical complaints</td>
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<td>-Likely to take sides, blame parent they think caused the separation</td>
<td>-Overactive to avoid thinking about separation</td>
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<td>-May make one parent all good and the other all bad</td>
<td>-Feel ashamed about separation, feel different from other children</td>
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<td>-More likely to ally with a parent or be alienated</td>
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| 13-18  | - Solidifying identity & establishing self in relation to rules & regulations of society | - May feel embarrassed by family break-up & react by de-idealizing one or both parents  
- Place peer needs ahead of family & may not want to visit non-resident parent | - Withdrawal from family  
- Difficulty concentrating  
- Engaging in high-risk behaviors (sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol use)  
- Worry about own future relationships |
ENHANCING COPING ABILITIES, PARTICULARLY PROBLEM-SOLVING & POSITIVE THINKING, CONTRIBUTES TO RESILIENCE AMONG CHILDREN

(Sandler, Tein, Mehta, Wolchik, & Ayers, 2000 in Lowenstein, 2006, p. 9)
Factors that Facilitate Healthy Adjustment

(Kelly & Emery, 2003 in Lowenstein, 2006, p. 9)

- Good adjustment of residential parent
- Competent parenting
- Regular access with adequate non-residential parent
- Reduced & encapsulated conflict between parents
- Parallel or cooperative co-parenting arrangements
- Limited family transitions
Group Counseling

• Recruit students – talk to parents
• Assessment with individual students
• Confidentiality

• Possible Session Topics
  – Identifying Feelings
  – Feeling Good about Myself (It’s not MY fault)
  – Coping with Divorce
  – The Facts about Divorce
  – Moving On.....
Feelings

• Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 38)
• My Parents’ Divorce Dice Game (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 40)
• Butterflies in my Stomach (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 44)
• Feelings Jar (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 103)
Feeling Good About Myself

• Feeling Like it’s My Fault (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 115)
• Feeling Good about Myself (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 129)
• Feel Good Messages (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 136)
Coping with Divorce

• Families (Lowenstein, 2013, p.13)
• The Coping with Divorce Game (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 137)
• Coping with Bad Dreams (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 131)
Facts About Divorce

• Visitations
• The Courts
• Sometimes I don’t see a Parent
• Step-Families
Moving On...

• Crumpled Paper Throw (Lowenstein, 2013, pp. 101-102)
• Pizza Party (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 156)
• Livesavers (Kenney-Noziska, 2008)
Bibliotherapy

References


