

# 6 WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH SEPARATION & DIVORCE

A Heart-Mind Guide for Parents & Educators



## 1 ENCOURAGE ACTIVE COPING SKILLS

[Solves Problems Peacefully]

Active coping employs problem solving strategies to deal with stress, rather than distraction or avoidance. Examples of active coping include talking about a situation, making a plan to feel better, and trying to see things in a positive, yet realistic, light.

## 2 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIALIZING

[Gets Along With Others]

Social time with peers, such as playdates, "hanging out," or participating in group activities, provides an opportunity for children to be themselves beyond their role in the family, receive peer support, and reap the well-being benefits of social connection.

## 3 OFFER THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

[Secure & Calm]

Therapeutic interventions such as one-on-one counselling or support groups can enhance well-being during family transitions. Other ways to boost feelings of calm include spending time in nature, practicing yoga and meditation, listening to music, and engaging in physical activity.

## 4 PROVIDE CHOICES WHEN APPROPRIATE

[Alert & Engaged]

Perceived lack of control can be a trauma trigger, and can detract from young people's well-being. To counter this, offer young people manageable, age-appropriate choices that are meaningful to them. Building up children's sense of personal agency helps them feel safer in their relationships and environment, which in turn helps them to stay alert and engaged during emotional highs and lows.

## 5 TELL THEM ITS NOT THEIR FAULT

[Compassionate & Kind]

Self-blame can act as a barrier to young people adjusting to family transitions in positive and healthy ways. Self-compassion, which includes a desire to help oneself feel better, is the antidote. Encourage your child to talk about their feelings, and model self-compassion as you respond to any feelings of guilt or blame.

## 6 SEEK OUT SILVER LININGS

[All 5 Heart-Mind Qualities]

Without minimizing very real feelings of pain, loss, anger, or confusion, counter your child's innate negativity bias by helping him or her find something positive, no matter how small, to focus on in the family transition.



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