



SEPARATION AND DIVORCE IN FAMILIES WITH A CHILD ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Dividing any family can be a significant challenge, fraught with heartbreak and tears. There are so many things to consider in any divorce situation, and when there are children with special needs the challenges can be even greater!

- Reassure the children about your love for them.
- Acknowledge their feelings of sadness.
- Reassure the children that this is a grown-up problem, and they did nothing to cause the split.
- Remind them that the demands of and the structure of everyday life will be mostly the same, only sometimes it will be Mom picking them up and sometimes Dad.
- Address housing issues. Where will Mom live? Where will Dad live? Will either parent keep the family home? Will a move necessitate a change in schools?
- Make sure both parents have scheduled and consistent times to spend with the children.
- Keep the custody schedule on a calendar so all are aware and can talk about it openly and freely.
- Assure the children about how you will spend time (together as a family with or without the other parent and with the children individually). Include information about how big occasions, such as birthdays and holidays will be spent.
- Preserve family traditions when you can and create new ones as needed. For example you may always go out for dinner at your child's favorite restaurant for their birthday. You will still do this, but maybe only with Dad on one day or only with Mom on another day.
- Talk about these differences and involve the children in choosing what you will do differently for holidays, birthdays, first day of school, etc.
- Help your children understand that Mom and Dad may not be able to live

together anymore because there is too much conflict, but both Mom and Dad will always love them.

- A Social Story™ may be helpful in conveying much of this information.
- Listen to your children and attend to their needs!

Provide plenty of time for your children to process the changes that will inevitably take place. Recognize that your children may not have been aware of your marital problems, and your separation and/or divorce may be a shock to them. The bottom line is that love and happiness can prevail, when the realities of life are discussed openly and honestly.

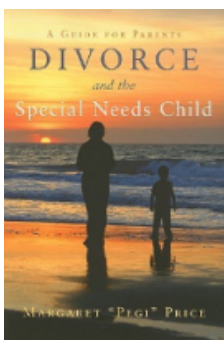
Related Articles:

- [Divorce, Custody, and ASD](#)
- [Life Cycle Events](#)
- [Is Divorce More Common in Families Living with ASD](#)
- [Re-marriage When You Have a Child with ASD](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Marital Quality and Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders](#)

Additional Reading:



Divorce and the
Special Needs
Child by
Margaret
“Pegi” Price

