**Tasks for Children of Divorce**

1. Understand what divorce means and what immediate changes will occur
   * + Differentiate fantasy fears from reality (children can have vivid fantasies of being abandoned, being placed in foster care, etc.)
     + With the help of parents, begin to understand the reality of divorce and adjust to changes in circumstances

1. Return to normal activities as soon as possible
   * + Without ignoring the divorce, move past focusing on it to once again focusing on their own interests and peer relationships
     + With encouragement from parents, remain children (i.e., not fix parents’ problems, take care of parents, or know inappropriate information)
2. Deal with loss
   * + Handle the loss of an intact family together with the symbolic and real protection it has provided
     + Accept the loss of the other parent in their daily lives
     + Understand that they are not the cause of the losses (i.e., believing “my parents split up because I was not lovable”)
     + Adjust to the losses with the help of positive relationships with both parents, who have a good, working visiting or joint custody arrangement
3. Handle their anger and fear
   * + Express their feelings about the parents’ failure to maintain the marriage and their wish to blame someone
     + Talk about the fear they may feel when parents are unhappy and disorganized
     + Work through this anger and fear by learning to see their parents as human beings capable of making mistakes, and respecting them for their efforts and courage
4. Work out guilt
   * + Notice and express guilt that comes from feeling responsible for the divorce
     + Understand that guilty feelings often arise at the time of divorce but typically dissipate as time passes
     + Hear from parents repeatedly that the divorce did not happen because of *anything* the children said or did
5. Accept the permanence of divorce
   * + Be treated compassionately by parents if expressing a belief that they will reconcile
     + Feel understood by the parents when strongly denying the reality of divorce
     + Be allowed to confront the reality of divorce slowly