

Supporting Children through Divorce

The Weller Way

Helping families become fully functional



THE WELLER WAY

Good Enough Parenting: The 5 C's

Communication: Open, non-judgemental, accepting and sensitive

Co-operation - Collaborative and flexible - Win/Win

Connection - being available and fully present and enough 1:1 time

Co- Regulation - ability to help children understand their feelings

Consistency - in all of the above

What children need post Divorce

- Strong relationship with either one or both parents
- Good enough parenting (Authoritative)
- Minimal exposure to conflict
- Time to talk and Active listening
- Maintenance of the familiar routine
- Re-assurance of Unconditional loving and that it wasn't their fault
- In the absence of a parent – earned attachment

Risks

- When child's economic situation deteriorates
- When one parent abandons a child
- When parents keep fighting
- When parents lose parenting "capacity"
- When a new step parent is harsh, rejecting or abusive
- Rigid thinking patterns of Neuro divergent children
- Rejection sensitive dysphoria of Neuro divergent children

Fifty years ago, it was widely assumed that the absence of male parental figures—fathers—accounted for the maladjustment of some children and adolescents in single-parent families (Biller, 1976) but the notion that children need to have both male and female parents in order to be well-adjusted has not been supported by the research (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999; Stevenson & Black, 1988).

Research conducted over the last four decades has demonstrated that both mothers and fathers are important to their children as parents, not as males and females, and that the parents' genders do not affect children's adjustment

(Lamb & Lewis, 2011)

How to tell children

- Keep it factual: Just say you have decided that you can't live together any longer, so you will live separately.
- Talk to your child or children together, and both accept responsibility so they won't blame one of you.
- You have decided that you can't live together anymore and will live separately
- Tell him that you both did your best to save the marriage and that the decision to live apart was made by both of you.
- Don't apologize for the decision. Instead, say that you think that even though there may be a tough transition, the divorce will give everyone a better life in the long run.
- If your child has seen you fighting, you can refer to that. Otherwise, just say that you are happier living apart, which will make you better parents when you live apart.
- Stress that each of you is still in a family with your child/children, and that you will stay connected as the child's parents.
- Reassure them that they aren't responsible for the separation.
- Emphasize that this is a decision that you will not reconsider.
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't ask children who they want to live with

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Make it age appropriate

Toddlers and pre-schoolers:

- Simple explanation and expect lots of questions
- Let them know what the practical arrangements will be
- Don't expect that one conversation will do the job
- Expect big emotions
- Expect behaviours driven by emotional instability
- Watch for faulty thinking
- Maybe changes in sleep e.g wakefulness

What they need

Maintenance of normal routine to provide stability and re assurance

Main caregiver to be fully present for co-regulation



Make it age appropriate

6-11 year olds

- May assign blame for split
- Big emotions
- Defiance or un-cooperation
- Fantasies about reconciliation and how they can bring that about

What they need

- Maintenance of normal routine to provide stability and re assurance is still important
- Main caregiver to be fully present for co-regulation
- Encourage talking about their feelings
- Use Books about Divorce to help them understand their feelings and that they are normal



Make it age appropriate

Teens

- Irritability and anger are common (in adolescence anyway) so hard to gauge
- Anger at you and the partner that moved out
- Lots of testing boundaries to see if you actually care
- Absorption of secondary stress, amplifies this.

What they need

Open communication, even though they might miscue

Be child led

Don't discuss Court proceedings or financial worries

Do as much as you can to make home a "safe haven"

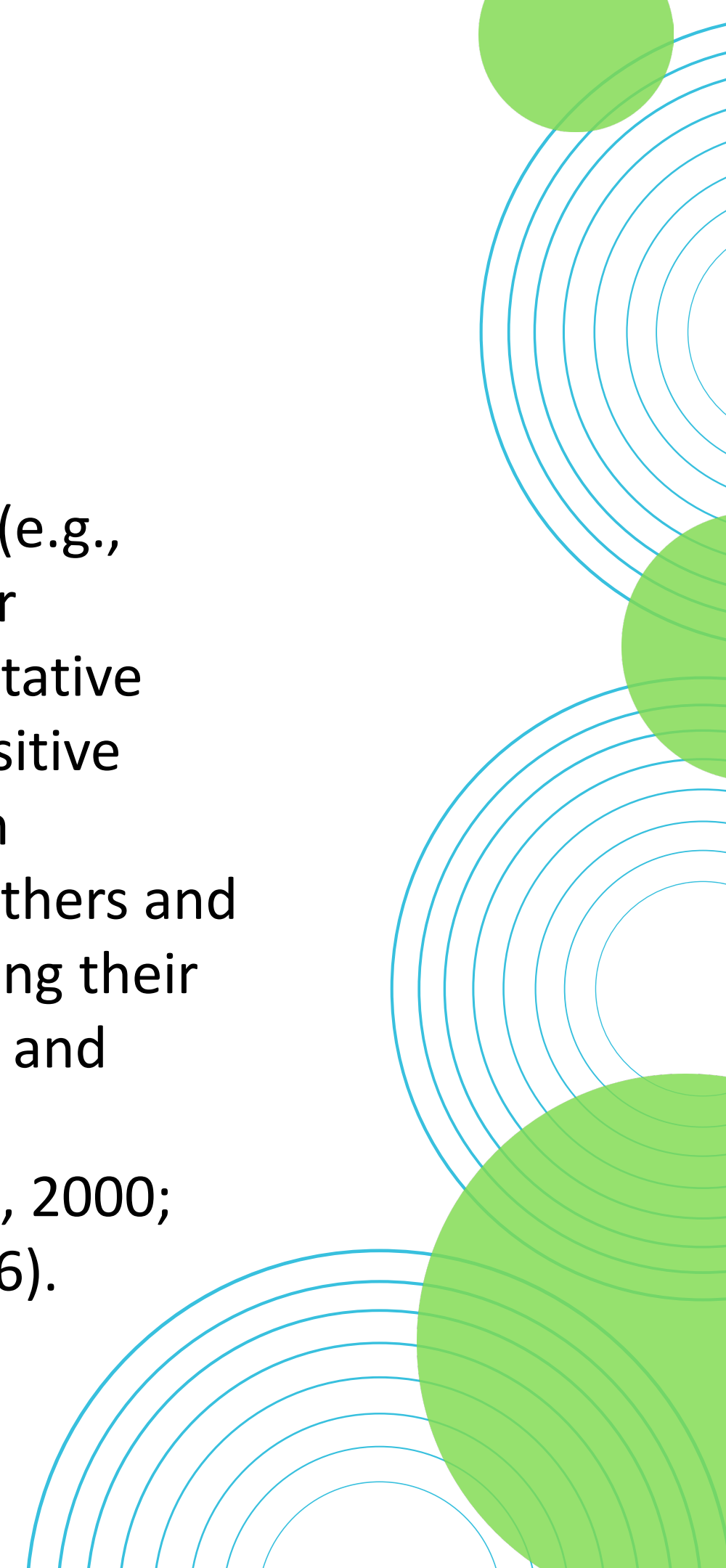
Accept that friends may be more important than you

Engage support from a Counsellor if necessary or use a close family member or friend as a mentor

Make it age appropriate

Teens

Research conducted and summarized by Steinberg and his colleagues (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg, 1990; Steinberg & Silk, 2002), for example, showed that, among older children and adolescents, authoritative parenting was associated with social competence, self-confidence, positive engagement, the absence of psychopathology and non-involvement in delinquent and antisocial behavior. Warm positive engagement by mothers and fathers in their children's lives and education (which includes monitoring their activities and relationships) is also associated with greater persistence and effort, better performance, and fewer behavioral problems at school, regardless of the family structure (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Collins et al., 2000; Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Pleck, 2010; Simons et al., 1996; Nord & Zill, 1996).



ANXIOUS

- Overly clingy
- Superficially compliant
- Sell souls for acceptance
- Openly destructive if told “NO”
- Emotional hunger
- Difficulty moving away to explore
- Difficult to soothe
- Difficult to show affection to others

INSECURE AVOIDANT

- Deactivates attachment needs to stay close
- Over independent
- Downplays needs/omits negative feelings
- Sullen
- Oppositional
- Emotionally distant

INSECURE AMBIVALENT

- Angry and defiant
- Increases volume of distress to get attention
- Destructive – things, people, pets
- Can't give or receive
- Only show affection when they want something
- Impulsive risk takers
- Unpredictable

DISORGANIZED

- Disassociated parts of self
- Mixture of the other behaviours
- Behaviours often for no apparent reason
- Experiences intense fear and shame
- Emotionally hyper aroused and then disassociates
- Can take on a “parent” role
- Controlling of others



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Avoiding conflict with A Co-parenting plan

<https://oratto.co.uk/infographic/the-oratto-parenting-plan.pdf>

Good Enough Parenting

Earned Attachment

Quality Experiences

Reduce Conflict with positive transitions

For you

Quality Self care

Robust boundaries

Awareness of Triggers for dysregulation

Your child didn't get divorced

Don't share your financial worries

Don't let your children "Take care" of you

Don't talk about your love life

Don't use children as messengers

Children's adjustment is affected by the quality of their experiences and the well-being of those around them, not by the make up and structure of their family.

Focus on the 5 C's

Connection

Communication

Co-operation

Connection

Co-Regulation

Consistency

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