

How To Answer Your Kids' Hardest Divorce Questions

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There is nothing more gut-wrenchingly sad than when your child, wide-eyed and hopeful, asks you this question: "Are you and dad ever going to get back together?"

These and other divorce questions from kids can feel like a punch in the stomach, causing anxiety, guilt and sorrow. There are no magical answers to your kids' questions because a divorce is undoubtedly very difficult for any child. But the silver lining is, if you put some thought into how you answer these difficult questions, if you have an unselfish attitude by filtering your answers, and if you end every answer with "We both love you," it makes the sting a lot more manageable.

Here are six common questions kids ask after a divorce, and suggestions on how to answer them.

1. Why did you and mom/dad get divorced?

Because your dad was cheating on me. Because your mom drinks too much. Because dad and I can't stand each other and we don't want to live together anymore. This is what you are probably feeling and what you'd like to scream at the top of your lungs. The fact is, you can't. A better way to answer this very difficult question is by saying something like this: "Your dad/mom and I once loved each other very much, but people change and people grow apart. Neither of us wanted that to happen, but it did. We tried very hard to work things out, but in the end, we both felt it was better. What hasn't changed is that your dad and I still love you, and both of us will always be here for you."

2. Do you still love mommy/daddy?

You might and you might not. If you do still love your ex, you might want to say, "There is a part of me that will always love your mom/dad. We share so much history, and most importantly, we share you. I will always love him/her for giving me you." If you don't feel like you can honestly say something like that, you could answer, "I don't love your mom/dad in the same way I used to. I respect him/her and I think he/she is a good mother/father. But now we are just going to be partners in parenting and hopefully good friends, some day."

3. Why do we have to be the only kids who have two houses?

Kids often feel like they don't know any other kids whose parents are divorced, which we all know isn't the case. The best answer makes it clear that they aren't alone, and that there are lots of other kids in their same situation. Make sure to tell them, "We are still a family. We

might not be the traditional family, but we have love and warmth and security in our home, and you have those same things in your mom's/dad's home. You aren't 'different.'"

4. Will you and mom/dad ever get remarried?

Be firm on this one. No need to give a child false hope. "No. Your mom/dad and I will never be remarried. But we both love you very, very much and we will both always be here for you."

5. Why does mom/dad hate you?

Because he/she is a bitter, unhappy person who can't let go of the past! Sound like something you want to say? Don't! Instead, go with, "Mom/dad is very angry right now, mostly at the situation, not at me. Give him/her some time and hopefully he/she will act a little friendlier towards me. The most important thing for you to focus on is that mom/dad loves you."

6. Did you love mommy/daddy when you had me?

This is perhaps one of the most important pieces of information you can share with your child. I think it's wonderful to tell your children stories of how you felt when you first met their mom/dad, how and why you fell in love, funny stories that happened when the two of you were dating, how he proposed, and my favorite, the story of your child's birth. Kids love this so much, and it helps build self-esteem and self-worth. The knowledge that you and your child's mom/dad loved each other at one time is the biggest gift you can give them.

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