

Divorce Mailbag

Margot Swann, the Founder & CEO of Visions Anew Institute, The Divorce Resource for Women, answers your divorce questions.



Margot Swann

Dear Margot,
My husband and I have tried to stay together for several years, but now divorce looks impossible to avoid. We wanted to stay married primarily for the children, and now I'm really worried about them. Although tempers are high around the house and I think the kids must have their suspicions, no one is talking. Their Dad is not concerned at all. He says children are resilient. Please tell me – is there a good way to tell the children that we are divorcing?
- Mama Bear.

Dear Mama Bear,
 What you are noticing about the atmosphere in the house is important. It's normal for you to react to it and to be concerned about how your children will respond, in both the short term and the long term, to the news of your divorce. Bob Boyd of Boyd, Collar, Nolan, & Tuggle, LLC has some good advice. Bob is a divorce attorney with 20 years experience in family law and a Dad.

The first question most women who are mothers ask in an initial consultation is "what about our children?"

The question has several layers, the first being how to let the children know a divorce is coming. I usually suggest that my client meet with a child psychologist to get some advice. Ideally, the father would attend the counseling session, too; but if he will not, I want my client to go. After telling the children, it is not unusual for a child to need some limited professional help. The same expert can fill this need.

Through it all, it is paramount that the children get the message that they are loved, that the parents are not divorcing because of something a child did. It is also critical to remember, especially if the father chooses not to participate in this step, that disparaging the father in front of (or to) the children will ultimately achieve exactly the opposite result that the client may hope. Children are, by nature, protective of their parents. If they perceive that their father is being disparaged by the mother, they will naturally seek to come to the aid of their father and defend him.

Following is a checklist to help you prepare for telling the children:

- Meet a child psychologist to prepare your approach.
- Attempt to have your spouse participate in this meeting.
- Talk to the children
- Stress your love and affection for them.
- Stress that they have done nothing to contribute to your divorce.
- Speak respectfully of the other parent at all times.
- Arrange for counseling for the children if needed.

Mama Bear, based on my experience Bob Boyd's response is right on. I particularly hope divorcing parents hear the point about how harmful it is to say nasty things to a child about his parent – even when it's true.

Send your divorce questions to: info@visionsanew.org
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Remember though you never expected to divorce, if it is unavoidable, do it with good information, with integrity, and with a team of experts. You don't have to divorce alone.

The divorce process is at best like juggling dozens of balls in a circus act. At its worst, it is like fighting for your life against a multi-headed dragon often while trying to shield your children from its flames.

Our mission is to empower divorcing women to successfully create and achieve a new vision for their lives.

Wise, professional women offer the tools to help you recapture your dignity and self respect.

Our programs educate, support, and connect divorcing women with professionals, resources and each other.



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