Common Adjustment Problems

• Some differences by age:
  – Preschool age: overly attached, belligerent (Kelly, 2000)
  – Grade school: refuse to go to school, visit nurse with illness (Kelly, 2000)
  – Middle and High School: lack motivation for schoolwork, sexual experimenting, self-destructive behaviors (Kelly, 2000)

• Refusal to see one parent (Jellinek, 2000)

• Feeling Guilty (Jellinek, 2000)

• Increases in anxiety and depression (Strohschein, 2005)

• Becoming overburdened with household responsibilities (Jellinek, 2000)

• New “odd” behaviors that someone meets their needs (Jellinek, 2000)

• Decreased academic performance (Bisnaire, Firestone, & Tynard, 1990)

• Unanimous Desire to have someone to talk to about the experience. (Hans, 2001)
Lifelong Impacts of Divorce

• Conflicts associated with divorce span many years for the child
  - Pre-divorce parental strain
  - Divorce event
  - Post-divorce conflicts over years: money, time, visitation, etc.
  (Rich, 2007)

• Children of divorce, at 32 years old, compared with children from non-divorced families show:
  - Unemployment
  - Lower educational achievement
  - Divorce
  - Negative life events
  - Greater risky health behaviors

• Females Specifically show:
  - more psychological problems
  - difficulties in interpersonal relationships
  Huurre, Junkkari, and Aro, (2006)
“Immediately after divorce, children in divorced families exhibit more problems in adjustment than those in high-conflict non-divorced families”
- Hetherington, 1999

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Don’t Forget the Parents!

Help parents navigate the logistics: notify the office for news and report cards to be sent to two addresses (Jellinek, 2000). Be ready to support parents, and also set limits and refer as needed.
Suggested Measures

As counselors, especially in the school, documenting and knowing the efficacy of interventions needs to be a priority!

- **Children’s Beliefs About Parental Divorce Scale**: Peer Ridicule and Avoidance, Paternal Blame, Fear of Abandonment Maternal Blame, Hope of Reunification, Self-Blame (Kurdek & Berg, 1987)

- **Revised Children’s Manifest Anxiety Scale**: Physiological Anxiety, Worry, Social Anxiety, Defensiveness, Inconsistent Responding index (Reynolds & Richmond, 1985)

- **Spielberger State Trait Anxiety Scale**: State Anxiety and Trait Anxiety

- **Children’s Depression Inventory**: Negative Mood, Ineffectiveness, Negative Self-Esteem, Adhedonia, Interpersonal Problems (Kovacs, 1981, 1992)

- **Child Behavior Checklist**: Social withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety and depression, destructive behavior, delinquent behaviors.
References


