

PECULIARITIES OF EMOTIONAL OF CHILDREN IN PROCESS OF DIVORCE PARENTS

DOI: DOI: 10.24234/miopap.v21i1.425

Narine Stepanyan, PhD, Associate Professor of Chair Applied Psychology
Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University

E-mail: stepanyannarine23@aspu.am

Mariana Avetisyan, PhD, Associate Professor of Chair Applied Psychology
Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University

E-mail: avetisyanmarianna23@aspu.am

Ani Nazaryan, Lecturer of the Chair of Applied Psychology
Khachatur Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University

E-mail: nazaryanani23@aspu.am

ABSTRACT

A significant place in the scientific literature is occupied by the study of the problem of the emotional state of children whose parents are in the process of divorce. The number of divorces has increased significantly in the last decade, which has a devastating effect on the mental inner world of children. Families that are in a difficult situation (divorce) feel lonely in the process of overcoming insurmountable problems.

The article discusses the features of the emotional state of children in the process of divorce of parents, due to different age stages.

They cannot realize the bad impact of the divorce process on the child. And the solution of one important problem remains unfinished: it is the restoration and preservation of the subtle inner world of the child in a chaotic situation. In this process, the child does not receive psychological support, protection, which leads to the fact that he is isolated from society, and considers himself the reason for the divorce of his parents.

Intolerance and conflict between spouses are common features that exist in most divorces. Lack of mutual understanding, conflicts are often observed in the divorce process, which leads to the need for its implementation in court. Divorce of parents disrupts the process of further socio-psychological development of children.

Keywords: *Emotional state, psycho-traumatic effect, conflict, behavioral changes, guilt, nervous manifestations, depressive background.*

INTRODUCTION

Divorce negatively affects not only the inner world of the child, but also the reality in which he lived before. This reality had a structure, content, kinship, stability, confidence in the future - the most important thing is that his parents love him. The divorce of parents affects the mental state of the child, the rhythm of the child's life is disrupted, since he no longer lives with both parents. The child spends most of the time with one of the parents, as a result of which an emotional connection is formed only with the latter (Karabanova, O. A., 2006).

J. Kelly and Yu. Wallerstein, who studied the mental state of children in the process of parental divorce, noted that they have strong emotional anxiety. However, after some time, adaptation was observed in some of the subjects, while others experienced a depressive background (Safuanov F. S., 2011).

Studies conducted with preschool children in the process of parental divorce have shown that divorce causes a psycho-traumatic situation.

- Emotional changes (crying, anxiety, guilt, longing for father or mother).
- Changes in behavior (aggressive behavior towards peers, stubbornness, demonstrative behavior, increase or decrease in activity)
- In the sphere of interpersonal relationships, there is isolation from peers, withdrawal into oneself, non-participation in games.
- Nervous disorders such as sleep disorders, appetite, fears, nocturnal enuresis (Aristova, M. N., 2018).

A. I. Zakharova, studying the manifestations of neurotic symptoms in preschool children of incomplete families, notes that hysteria, stubbornness and negativity are observed in the behavior of boys, and stuttering in girls (Zakharov A. I., 2007).

Russian psychologist S. K. Nartova-Bochaver mentions that parents' divorce is always traumatic for the child, even years later he is remembered as the most painful reality of life. Depressive background, negativity, as well as demonstrative disagreement with the parents' opinion prevail in the child's mental feelings. S. Klimova notes that the child's perceptions of family, love and fidelity in connection with the divorce of their parents change dramatically (Nartova–Bochvar S. K., 2008).

The Austrian psychoanalyst H. Figdor emphasizes maintaining a stable positive relationship with both parents as a guarantee of harmonious mental development. The point is not so much in the frequency of meetings with a parent who does not live with a child, but in their trusting relationship.

The attitude of parents to each other plays a big role in the free and easy communication of the child. The emotional reaction of the child to the divorce of the parents can be manifested.

In the form of anger

The child's anger is often caused by a feeling of helplessness when the situation gets out of control and he is unable to reconcile the parents. The child can not come to terms with the fact that the parents' own interests are more important than his own. Identification processes play a big role in expressing anger.

Discussing the example of two sisters, H. Fidgor mentions that one of the girls identified with her father accused her mother of divorce, and the other girl, identified with her mother, did not forgive the woman for whom her father left home (Figdor, G.1995).

H. Fidgor notes that by expressing anger, the child is trying to get rid of the guilt associated with the divorce of his parents.

The child may for many years maintain in the inner world the illusion that he is important to the parents.

And at the same time, the child retains a sense of guilt towards the parent (Figdor, G. 1995).

In the form of fear

The departure of a parent from home causes fear in the child. The coincidence of fantasy and reality, for example, when he wanted his father to disappear, and this came true, the child is frightened. He is afraid of his own power, he thinks that he will lose his mother. The child is tormented by a number of domestic issues. Will he see his father, or who will make the money? What will he say to his peers if they ask about his parents? These questions take a lot of strength from the child, as a result of which he may develop hysterical fearfulness. Fidgor notes that the child's emotional experiences - sadness, anger, guilt - are the means by which he or she adapts to the situation. Anger is an expression of disappointment, a form of struggle, and also an impulse for adults to restore trust in each other. If parents find the strength and courage in themselves and explain to the child that he is not to blame for their divorce, the child's feelings of guilt will decrease significantly. On the other hand, returning to the identification process, H. Fidgor notes that children who are in the active phase of identification with their parents lose their essence when the parent leaves the family (Figdor, G. 1995).

After divorce, it is difficult for parents to adapt to their new marital status, each of them is busy restoring peace of mind and rearranging their personal life. All this leads to the fact that the child is relegated to the background, we find that it is doubly difficult for

the child to adapt to the new scenario of life. The parents' obsession with solving their own problems creates a gap between the child and the parent, which is the basis for the child to begin to think that he is not loved and that he is a burden for the parents. He feels misunderstood, alone in this world. During this period, the child needs double attention and care. And the priority task of the state is to protect the interests of children with different legal status, to help stabilize the emotional state, strengthen the child's self-esteem, socialization, prevention of social isolation, correction of negative attitudes towards adults and peers, enhancing the ability to cope with stress.

In divorced families, children of different age groups have different manifestations of the emotional sphere.

Preschool (3–5)

Between the ages of 3 and 5, children are developing more of an understanding of the abstract. They're asking lots of questions and figuring out how they fit into the world around them. That doesn't mean they understand the concept of divorce. In fact, they're likely relying heavily on the security and stability of their parents' presence as they branch out into new and unknown experiences and feelings. But if the parents are fighting, children this age may feel strongly that their world is being rocked in scary ways. A sense that all isn't OK with their parents may lead your child to react with crying, fear, and innocent insistence that you just stop fighting and go back to the "way you were "(Timothy J. Legg, PhD, PsyD2020).

Elementary school age (6–12)

This is arguably the toughest age for children to deal with the separation or divorce of their parents. That's because they're old enough to remember the good times (or good feelings) from when they were a united family. They're also old enough to understand more complex feelings around conflict and fault, though not fully.

- You may hear questions like:
- If you love me, why can't you stay together?
- What did I do?
- Is this because I don't always do what I'm told?
- I promise I'll be a good kid.
- Does Dad/Mom not love me anymore? Is that why they want to leave?

Notice the pattern: These questions all revolve around the child themselves. They're wondering about their role in the divorce and tend to make it more about them than about what could be going on between two adults.

These feelings can lead to depression in your kid — short- or long-term. And the

effects of what happens during these years can impact future emotional well-being. Your child may become withdrawn, uncommunicative, and anxious. Alternatively, they may lash out in anger at you or their other parent or play one of you off the other. This is where you may hear stereotypical phrases like “I want to live with Dad!” or “Mom let me do [fill-in-the-blank]!” Your child’s teachers may comment about your child’s relationships with peers or adults. So, what does help? As with younger kids, it’s important that you and your soon-to-be-ex try to be amiable in front of your elementary-school-aged child. Try to minimize conflict and work out divorce or separation details behind closed doors or with the help of a mediator or divorce counselor. Of course, the best-case scenario is that both parents remain actively involved in the child’s life as loving supporters. This isn’t always possible or advised, though. If you’re in a situation of abuse or domestic violence, the best thing for your child may indeed be the absence of one parent. Children of this age will often come to terms with even a traumatic divorce in hindsight as they grow in maturity. Getting counseling through a professional therapist and emotional support through family and friends can be a huge help during and after the divorce (Timothy J. Legg, PhD, PsyD 2020).

Teenagers

By the time your kids are teenagers, they’re much more likely to understand the underlying feelings that lead to divorce or separation.

In fact, if home life is in turmoil, they may even see the final split as a relief and gain a sense of resolution. They’re also less likely to feel like they’re at fault for the divorce or that togetherness at any cost is best. Teenagers are often self-centered, but unlike elementary age kids, their world more typically revolves around their life outside home. So they don’t question their parents’ love for them as much as they just want to get on with their lives. They may worry about how the divorce will affect their social situation (e.g., whether they’ll have to move away from their friends) and may idealize the past. But they can recognize divorce as having the potential to make things better. In general, acceptance comes more readily. But remember that your teenager — especially your younger teen — is still a child who hasn’t fully matured in their thinking. Be sure you have the tools in place to help them cope with a new reality. You may want to let their teachers know about the transition. Talk honestly with your teen about their thoughts and feelings. Listen. Ask them if they want to talk with a counselor (Timothy J. Legg, PhD, PsyD 2020).

CONCLUSION

- Discrediting each other in the presence of the child during the divorce process is a reason for the child to recognize that the discredit is directed at himself, he is the bearer of these bad qualities.

- According to the parents, through defamation, the child better understands which parent is right and has positive aspects. With this step, the parents force the child to make a very difficult choice. He has to make a choice between two parents ", to avoid all this the child is locked in his inner world, becomes indifferent, isolated from society.

- In many cases, the child does not want to live with any parent, because he is tired of being in the center of constant quarrels. He wants to be where there is harmony, stability, and peace.

- The emotional experiences of a child of a divorced couple - fear, anger, guilt - contribute to the process of adapting the child to a new situation.

- The main reason for the conflict of spouses in the divorce process is related to the similarity of third parties, which can lead to psychological problems in their child when choosing a spouse in the future.

REFERENCES LIST

- Aristova, M. N. (2018)** Osobennosti reagirovaniya detey doshkolnogo vozrasta na razvod roditel'ey (Features of preschool children's response to parents' divorce, in Russian): dis. master. psychological sciences Moscow.
- Zakharov, A. I. (2007)** Preduprezhdenie otkloneniy v povedenii rebyonka: monograficheskoye issledovanie (Prevention of deviations in child behavior: a monographic study, in Russian. St. Petersburg: Soyuz.
- Karabanova, O. A. (2006)** Psikhologiya semeynykh otnosheniy i osnovy semeynogo konsultirovaniya: uchebnoye posobie (Psychology of family relations and the basics of family counseling: textbook, in Russian. Moscow: Gadariki.
- Nartova–Bochvar S. K., Nesmeyanov, M. I., Malyarova N. V. Mukhortova E. A. (2008).** Rebyonok v karuseli razvoda (The child in the divorce carousel, in Russian). Moscow.
- Safuanov F. S., N. K. Kharitonova, O. A. Rusakovskaya (2011).** Psikhologo-psykhiatricheskaya ekspertiza po sudebny sporam mezhdru roditel'yami o vospitaniimestejhitelstvarebyonka: uchebnyk (Psychological and psychiatric examination of litigation between the parents about the

education and place of residence of the child: a textbook, in Russian).
Moscow: Genesis.

Figdor, G. (1995) *Deti razvedyonnikh roditeley: mezhdru travmoy nadezhdy (psikhologicheskoe issledovanie)* (Children of divorced parents: between trauma and hope (psychological research , in Russian) / Moscow: Nauka,
https://pedlib.ru/Books/5/0204/5_0204-3.shtml#book_page_top

Medically reviewed by Timothy J. Legg, PhD, PsyD (2020) Written by The Healthline
Parenthood Editors on November 30,
<https://www.healthline.com/health/childrens-health/worst-age-for-divorce-for-children>

The article submitted and sent to review: 19/09/2020

Accepted for publication: 22/02/2022

© The Author(s) 2022. Open Access. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.