

Common Questions Children Ask (and some simple responses)

Learn how to answer the most common "tough" questions your children may ask you when you are going through divorce with the help of Dr. Lisa Rene Reynolds. Follow these suggestions to avoid the struggle of finding a response to a simple question.

By Dr. Lisa Rene Reynolds Updated: September 01, 2014

Categories: Children and Divorce

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The following are a few tough questions children have asked in my sessions and some simple, direct ways for parents to respond. Parents should consider the child's age and modify their responses to address the specific situation. There is no one right way to answer a child's questions. However, the following suggestions are good starting points for parents who are struggling with what to say to their kids.

"Why are you and mom getting a divorce?"

"There are many reasons your mom and I are getting divorced. Lots of the reasons you will not be able to understand until you are older. There are lots of things that Mom and I disagree on, and these things are so important that neither one of us can give up what we think and feel. I know it's confusing to you now, but we'll keep talking about it and one day when you're older you might be able to understand it all a little bit better."

"Do you still love daddy?"

"No, I don't love Daddy the way I used to. It takes a very special kind of love to make a marriage last. It doesn't work the same way that always loving your child works." Another response might be: "Of course I still love Daddy, but not in the way I used to. There are many different kinds of love, and the kind you need to make a marriage work, we don't have anymore."

"Why do you hate mommy so much?"

"I don't hate Mommy. I get angry with her, yes. But I have gotten angry at many people in my life and not hated them. Your mom is a great person in a lot of ways and there are things I like about her very much. But Mommy and I are disagreeing about lots of things right now and sometimes we get frustrated and mad at each other. We'll work it all out, though."

"If I promise to be really good, will you get back together?"

"All kids show good and bad behavior sometimes. Being good or not good is not ever the reason parents get divorced. So, no, if you change your behavior, it won't mean that we will get back together. So just keep being you, exactly like you are, because that's who we love so much, no matter what."

“Why did daddy leave us?”

“Daddy didn’t leave us. Daddy left the house. Daddy left the marriage. But Daddy did not, and will not, ever leave you.”

“Why don’t I see my cousin Rachel anymore?”

If it’s because of the parenting plan arrangement, an appropriate answer might be: “Sometimes after a divorce, because the kids don’t always see each parent all the time and on every holiday, the kids see less of certain family members, too. Maybe we can talk to Dad about getting you together with Rachel sometime soon.”

If it’s because a family member has “taken sides” against one parent and refuses to see that parent, a fitting response might be:

“Sometimes a divorce can bring up strong feelings and opinions for other family members, and their anger or hurt makes them want a little space from the family. We’ll just have to wait and see what happens and we’ll try to talk to her later when she’s had some time to think about things.”

“Do I have to like mom’s new boyfriend?”

“Of course we can’t make you like someone, but we would like for you to give Mom’s new boyfriend a chance. It would be easier for everyone if it turned out that you liked him, even just a little bit, because he will be spending a lot of time with the family.”

“But if dad lets me do it, why can’t you?”

“People are different and parents are different, too. I know it’s hard to get used to following two sets of rules at the two different homes, but that’s just the way it is going to be. Just because Dad lets you do it isn’t a good enough reason for me to feel comfortable letting you do it.”

“When will dad stop acting like a jerk?”

“I can’t answer that. I don’t know why your dad says and does certain things. I can’t speak for your dad, but I think that if you feel that strongly about how he is acting, it’s important for you to talk to him about it.”

Dr. Lisa Rene Reynolds is a therapist specializing in marriage counseling and therapy with families going through divorce. She teaches a court-mandated divorce-parenting class for the State of Connecticut. This article has been excerpted from her book *Still a Family: A Guide to Good Parenting through Divorce*.

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