

## Protecting Children From Harm

In most cases children are able to adjust to the changes that divorce brings, however, for some children divorce increases the risk of mental health issues, school problems, behavioural problems and difficulties in relationships. Research has shown that these risk factors are caused by children's exposure to conflict.

Children can experience conflict in many ways:

- witnessing arguments
- hearing, or overhearing, talk about the conflict
- hearing, or overhearing, criticism and judgement about their parent
- witnessing anger or disrespect towards their parent
- feeling guilty about their time with a parent
- worrying about a parent
- having their lives made difficult or complicated because of their parents difficulties in coparenting

The harmful roles that children can be placed in:

- Caregiver: when they feel the need to care for or protect a parent
- Side Taker: when they feel that they must give allegiance to a parent
- Messenger: when they are responsible for communication between their parents
- Spy: when they are questioned for information regarding a parent

What can be done to protect children:

- Parents can create child friendly zones where no adult talk takes place
- Parents can fully support their child's loving relationship with both parents
- Parents can show respect for their coparent
- Parents can get the professional help they need to move through their conflicts
- Parents can look after themselves and show up positively for their children