

FACTSHEET No 17:

What Makes a Good Mum and Dad?

A recent survey from family lawyers group Resolution found that children would prefer their parents to split up if they are unhappy rather than stay together for their sake. 82 % said they would prefer their parents to separate rather than stay together if they do not get on.

This confirms the overriding conclusion from much recent research into how children handle parental separation and conflict. Children can adapt very well to parental separation and changes in living arrangements. What causes them significant long-term problems is prolonged exposure to parental conflict.

You could read the full details of the Resolution Survey and conclusions here:

http://www.resolution.org.uk/news-list.asp?page_id=228&page=1&n_id=298

And I thought it might be worth replicating a list written by New Zealand counselor Wally McKenzie with children he has worked with who are troubled by ongoing conflict between their parents. It seems to sum up what most children want from their parents when they separate.

My Dream Mum and Dad

1. They would let each other see their children as much and as often as they can.
2. It would be great if Mum and Dad just got along – not even as friends would be OK.
3. They would encourage the children to have a good time with the other parent.
4. They would not swear at their children
5. They might punish their children a bit if they are naughty and that's OK. But they wouldn't hit us.
6. They will appreciate and love their children by telling them so when they come and stay or call up and talk.
7. They would try to create a home where the children would look forward to coming back and want to call them up.

Further Information & Help:

Call 0117 9243880 or email:

frances@progressive-mediation.co.uk

charles@progressive-mediation.co.uk

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a better way to settle

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8. They would talk about parent things with each other and not talk to the children about parent things.
9. They would swap or share birthdays and Christmases in a helpful way without getting angry at each other.
10. They would keep their promises to us.
11. They would not bad-mouth each other.
12. When they get angry with each other it messes up their love for us. Hating each other makes it harder for children.
13. They would both talk to our teachers – maybe not together though.
14. They would be really busy loving their children, not fighting over them. They would know that there was enough of their children to love and go around for everyone.
15. They would each sit down with their children from time to time and ask them “How’s it going?” and “How could it be better?”
16. Parents should have to go for a tune up from time to time for being separated parents. How else do they know how they are doing?

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