

A HANDOUT FOR PARENTS

Helping Your Children Stay Connected During Divorce

Divorce can make parents focus on the most visible threat: losing time with their children. But children can also lose access to a parent who is physically present and emotionally overwhelmed. Guilt, anger, fear, and conflict can pull a parent inward at the same time a child needs steadiness most.

Children rarely remember perfect conversations. They remember who kept showing up.

- **Keep showing up.** Continue routines, keep promises, and protect ordinary time together.
- **Keep children out of the adult conflict.** Do not use them as messengers, investigators, referees, or allies.
- **Do not ask them to choose.** A child should not have to prove love for one parent by rejecting the other.
- **Stay interested even when they pull away.** Withdrawal, especially in teenagers, is not always indifference.
- **Listen before you fix.** A child may need room to say what this is like without being reassured, corrected, or recruited into your version of events.
- **Notice meaningful changes.** New anger, isolation, sleep problems, falling grades, or disappearing into gaming, sports, work, or friends can be information that something has become harder to carry.

Presence does not mean being perfectly calm or having the right words. It means remaining available enough that your child does not have to manage the divorce and your emotional state at the same time.

For teenage boys in particular: a boy who stops showing that he cares has not necessarily stopped caring. Sometimes showing it has simply become harder. Keep the door open without forcing him through it.