The Impact of Divorce on Teens

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With more than one million divorces in the U.S. annually, many teens are experiencing dramatic changes in their lives.

University of Florida researchers say that some teenaged children react to their parents’ divorce in unhealthy ways. They may act out or rebel, feel angry or hurt, refuse to accept the divorce, and might become highly critical of others.

Dr. Millie Ferrer with University of Florida IFAS Extension recommends telling your teen about the divorce as soon as the decision is made. Let them know what changes may be occurring in the future, such as moving to a new house or school. Although changes will most likely happen, UF experts recommend that you try to follow your normal family routines as much as possible to help your teen cope.

If possible, both parents should participate in this conversation, so sit down ahead of time and discuss what you are going to calmly tell your teen. Do not go into the details of your marital problems, but have a brief explanation ready for them when they ask. Encourage your teen to ask questions about the divorce and share their feelings with you.

Most importantly, tell your teen that they are in no way responsible for the divorce and should not blame themselves. Honest and open communication will help your family cope with changes in the family structure.

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