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## **Possible Problems to Look for in Children of Divorce**

1. Sadness-immature grasp of the events together with their difficulty in sorting out their own fantasy and dream from reality rendered them especially vulnerable (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).
2. Fear- they may conclude that other relationships might similarly come undone and they might be left alone.
3. Crying, tantrums during routine separations- i.e.-, parent leaving for work or going out for the evening.
4. Bedtime becomes a tense and unhappy battle of wills-children may wake frequently.
5. Regression- very young children may return to their security blankets, outgrown toys. Lapses in toilet training are possible-may last only a short time but are signals for increased care when a parent may not have time or patience.
6. Macabre Fantasy- helps explain the father's departure and the marital disruption most frightened and regressed were those who had not received any explanation of the events in the family and were at the mercy of their own immature fantasy explanations absence of suitable explanations and assurance from preoccupied parents added to their reliance on their own immature explanations-common fear of being left hungry.
7. Bewilderment- concept of the dependability of human relationships and personal ties had been profoundly shaken.
8. Fantasy Denial- especially common in girls, wish fulfilling fantasies.

9. Rise or Inhibition of Aggression- very aggressive and for some, fearful of getting attacked.

10. Guilt- accept responsibility for parent leaving.

11. Emotional Neediness- need for physical contact, nurturing and protection.

12. Some are able to cope successfully-children whose lives had been disrupted but did not feel rejected by parents or given poor care.

13. Younger children, under 5, have greater difficulty than children over age 5.

14. Children between the ages of 3 years 9 months and 4 years 9 months- experience self-blame, poor self-esteem, delay in developmental progress cognition, and behavior control problems.

15. Some children will have improved relationships with their fathers following divorce however, girls generally visited their fathers less than boys.

Sources:

Wallerstein, J.S. and Kelly, J.B. Surviving the Break-up: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce.

New York: Basic Books, 1980.

Menninger Clinic, Topeka, Kansas, Marriage & Family Systems Training Program, 1996.

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