

# **Recognizing Stress in Children**

## **Recognizing Stress in Children Coping with High-Conflict Parents, Divorce, and Separation.**

Children experiencing stress typically regress to an earlier development stage to feel more secure. Older children take control and their behavior can show signs of hyper-maturity to self-nurture or take control of what feels like an uncontrollable event.

The following guidelines identify children's reactions and adjustment behaviors to stressful events.

Development Stages:

### **I. BABY, NEWBORN, INFANTS AND TODDLERS:**

A. Regression in potty training, sleep, eating.

1. Wakes frequently during the night and fights/refuses sleep in general after previously sleeping well.

2. Clingy and cranky.

3. Temper tantrums, crying.

### **II. THREE TO FIVE YEARS:**

A. Regression: setbacks potty training, security toys and blankets.

1. Hyper-sensitive, emotional.

2. Guilt, unrealistic behavior fear of not pleasing parent.

3. Anxious behavior.

4. Fear, clinginess, fear of abandonment.

5. Temper tantrums, irritability, and aggression.

### **III. SIX TO EIGHT YEARS:**

A. Sadness feeling rejected or responsible.

1. Emotional signs; Crying and sobbing.

2. Afraid unrealistic thoughts.
3. Daydreams of parents' reconciliation.
4. Loyalty conflicts.
5. Behavior changes; impulse control, disorganized behavior.

#### **IV. NINE TO TWELVE YEARS:**

- A. Attempts to bring order to situation.
  1. Loneliness.
  2. Anger, blaming parent for causing the divorce.
  3. Physical symptoms; headaches, stomach aches, fatigue.
  4. Overactive to be acting in avoidance to not think of divorce.
  5. Feeling ashamed, isolated different from other children.

#### **V. ADOLESCENTS:**

- A. Fear, anxiety, loneliness.
  1. Feels abandoned.
  2. Pressure to achieve independence.
  3. Competitive with attention of parents.
  4. Worry, Doubt, Fear of future.
  5. Memory, focus, fatigue; difficulty concentrating.
  6. Grief, sadness, mourning loss of family of their childhood.