

Children are victims of parents' divorce

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the conclusion of the story on the effects children endure when their parents divorce.

Children in the United States are effected by the divorce of their parents everyday. They are the victims; the ones who matter the most.

Dr. Richard Warshak, a professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and a Clinical Psychologist in private practice, said the most negative effect on children when their parents divorce is the sense of loss.

"Children see less of their mother because they are having to work more to support themselves and their children," he said. "The children also tend to lose touch with their fathers' parents."

There are many immediate effects children endure when their parents break up, Warshak said.

"Divorce is very tough on kids," he said. "It is stressful on the family."

Warshak said younger children demand more attention and cry a lot when their parents divorce.

"The younger children's behavior becomes less mature," he said. "Older children tend to complain a lot about headaches and stomachaches."

Children lose the sense of a family unit as they know it, Warshak said.

"The most disruptive loss is the loss between the children and their grandparents," he said. "At the time of a break up, grandparents can offer something valuable to the children."

Divorce is one of the toughest things a child goes through because

it changes the way they sense the world, Warshak said.

"They no longer have the security," he said. "The children may feel the space between visiting their other parent is too long."

Warshak said there are many ways to help ease the effects the children endure during their parents' divorce.

"The child should be allowed to see each parent enough to maintain a high quality relationship with each of them," he said. "The parents should shield children from any of the conflict between them."

Warshak said parents should use good childrearing practice.

"The parents' own guilt about the divorce leans them to be more lenient toward the children," he said.

Parents need to minimize the changes for children as much as possible, Warshak said.

"It would be easier on the children if the parent they reside with stays in the same suburb," he said.

"That way the children have the same friends, go to the same school, and the location will be familiar to them."

The children need a good social support system, Warshak said.

"The father, mother, grandparents and relatives all need to stay involved with the children as much as possible," he said. "I am a strong advocate for keeping families together and helping to keep parents mutually involved with their children."

Beverly Stern, director of community education and training service at the Families First Program in Georgia, said the biggest effect on children of divorced families is the disruption in parenting.

"This disruption could be for a

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brief amount of time or a long term effect," she said. "Losing a parent in a divorce is something a child goes through everyday."

Stern said the "lost" parent has a tendency to drop out of the family picture.

"The child may lose connection with the parent," she said.

There is also economic stress on the family, Stern said.

"The child feels the effect of the economic drop," she said. "It effects the child's life abruptly and their lifestyle changes."

In order to help ease these effects on the children, Stern said there are many possible solutions.

"We need to help support the family," she said. "When the parents divorce, we need to help them adjust to it."

"We need to do this in order to rapidly reestablish a normal life and provision for the children."

Stern said the parents understand the family will move on.

"The parents know they will al-

ways be parents to their children," she said. "The parents need to work together."

The movie, 'War of the Roses,' is a good example of our stereotype of what divorce is really like, Stern said.

"We need to get away from the myths," she said. "The parents need to operate on an adult level and in doing so we could provide models for parents in co-parenting."

Stern said we have a lot of mistaken ideas about what a parents' role is.

"Parents will have to make a decision on what kind of a relationship they will have," she said. "Whether that relationship be on a level of friendliness or being enemies."