

**CHILDHOOD ISSUES  
AND CONCERNS:  
SEPARATION/LOSS OF  
PARENTS, WORKING  
PARENTS, TRAUMA  
SURVIVORS.**

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# COUNSELLING

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- Counselling is the service offered to the individual who is under going a problem and needs professional help to overcome it.
- The concept of counselling has existed for a long time. People have sought through the ages to understand themselves, offer counsel and develop the potential, become aware of opportunities and, in general, help themselves in ways associated with formal guidance practice.
- The need for counselling has become paramount in order to promote the well-being of the child. Effective counselling should help to improve the self-image of young people and facilitate achievement in life tasks.

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Child related issues regarding counseling may include

- Family/ relationship issues
- Bullying
- Emotional problems
- Behavioral problems
- Literacy/ Educational issues

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- As a parent, guardian or teacher, it is important to have open discussions with the child from a very young age. It is important to make the child acknowledge their own fears, concerns and anxiety.
  - The child should get a fear free environment to share his/her views with the trusted adult. It is also important not to be judgmental, so that children are able to share their feelings and address difficult aspects of their life.

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATION WHILE COUNSELING CHILDREN

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- Setting up a positive relationship
- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality
- Including family members
- Connecting with associated parties
- Boundaries and power in the child–counsellor relationship including time, session length, availability, place, behaviour during the session, and appropriate touch.
- Values
- Professional Competence

# SEPARATION/LOSS OF PARENTS

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- During divorce children experience various stages.
  1. In the **denial stage**, the children simply fail to believe that their parents, the adults who provide them with safe home, shelter, and food, could ever part. During this time, the children reassure themselves that their parents will stay together, or if already separated, will soon reunite. This reunion fantasy often persists for years. Children who do not get the support they need can become temporarily stuck in the denial stage.
  2. Denial is followed by **anger**, the second stage. Children can be furious at their parents for not trying harder to stay together, for permitting the divorce to happen, for ruining their lives, and for dashing their dreams of the future as they had it planned. Acting-out behaviour often accompanies the anger. Children enter the bargaining stage by trying to undo the damage by changing their own actions. If they get better grades, perform their daily chores without complaining, or quit fighting with their sibling, surely the absent parent will return home to stay. At certain ages, children might actually believe some real or imagined misbehaviour on their own part drove away a parent.

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3. In the **depression stage**, there is a pervasive sadness that permeates every aspect of the child's life. They are sad and tired every day at school and at home. Children who reach this stage and who appear to be driven to succeed in some way must be watched closely, as they might be suffering the most and overcompensating to control the emotions they feel.
  4. Finally, **acceptance** occurs when the children have gained the emotional experience and distance to see that perhaps the divorce was for the best and that their parents are happier living apart than they would have been living together. This stage usually occurs only in older children or even young adults

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- Many studies have shown that children of divorce/single parent have more behavioral and conduct problems when compared with the children in intact two-parent families.
  - They have more aggressive, impulsive, and antisocial behaviors and more problems in their relationships with their mothers and fathers.
  - They exhibit lower academic achievement, with three of four children showing a deterioration from their previous school performance. Children who experience divorce or loss of parent at younger ages are more likely to have problems.
  - Divorced boys living with their fathers and divorced daughters living with their mothers showed fewer effects than children living with the opposite-sex parent.
  - Divorced families are more common, less different, and less stigmatized. They are more recognized and accepted by society and have generated a more open support system.



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It is important for the child to

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Experience the pain and emotional aspects of the loss
- Adjusting to an environment without the deceased
- Relocating the dead person in one's life

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S.N O.	AGE GROUP	EFFECT OF DIVORCE/LOSS OF PARENT
1	0-2	<p>Children in this age group are highly dependent on their parents. If one parent has taken on primary responsibility for care of a child it is almost certain that a strong physical and emotional dependence will develop between them. Lengthy separation from this parent can be a source of intense emotional distress.</p> <p>A high level of conflict between the parents can make visits extremely stressful for a child of this age.</p>
2	2.5- 5	<p>Children in this age group begin to be a little more independent of their parents. Separation can be a major crisis for these children and they can react with shock or depression.</p> <p>Pre-school children understand the world through very different thought processes than older children. They often fantasise about what they don't understand and are likely to make up things from bits of their own experience.</p> <p>They are sensitive to criticism about either parent and may perceive this as criticism of themselves.</p>

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3	5-8	<b>Children in this age group are beginning to be able to talk about their feelings. They often have an intense wish to restore their parents' relationship and say and do things they hope will bring this about. They often want to stay at home to be near the parent with whom they spend most of their time</b>
4	8-12	Children in this age group are able to speak about their feelings. They experience a conflict of loyalty between each parent and, if the conflict between parents is high, they may try to cope by rejecting one parent or trying to keep both happy by saying negative things about one to the other. They are also beginning to experience the world outside their family.
5	12-16	independent of their parents, even when parents are not separated. They need to be given time and space to work out their own reactions to their parents' separation. If pressured by either parent, adolescents are likely to react with anger and rejection. They particularly need flexibility in arrangements to allow them to participate in normal adolescent social activities and school events.

# WORKING PARENTS

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- Parents are first teachers of children.
- Working parents in 21<sup>st</sup> century plays an important role in the development of the child.
- Change in family structure from joint to nuclear.
- Parents need to be more mature in handling the issues of children.

# EFFECTS

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- Better autonomy and independence
- Coping with stress
- Enhanced life experiences
- Good quality of life style
- Safety concerns
- Diluted bonding with parents
- Lack of time
- Behavioural and psychological issues

# TRAUMA SURVIVORS

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- A traumatic event poses a threat to a child's life or physical safety. This includes events that are frightening, dangerous, or violent.
- For some kids, there may be no time for healing between traumatic events — their life is in an almost constant state of chronic stress and trauma.
- Examples of childhood trauma include:
  - physical abuse
  - sexual abuse
  - psychological and emotional abuse
  - neglect
  - natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, or fires
  - homelessness
  - racism
  - serious accidents or life-threatening illness
  - violent loss of a loved one

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- Childhood trauma affects each person differently. However, there are some common signs and symptoms to watch out for in both kids and adults.
  - In preschool and elementary-age children:
    - separation anxiety
    - becoming anxious and fearful
    - difficulty sleeping and increase in nightmares
    - crying or acting out
    - decrease in appetite
    - moodiness
    - increased aggression and anger

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- Teens can experience all of the signs mentioned above, plus the following:
  - irritability
  - withdrawal from social activities
  - academic problems
  - self-blame for the event (guilt and shame)
  - feeling depressed
  - difficulty concentrating
  - eating disorders and other self-harm behaviors



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- Other emotional, physical, and behavioral signs
  - anxiety
  - depression
  - panic attacks
  - poor concentration
  - fatigue
  - impulsiveness
  - problems with sleep
  - chronic health conditions
  - compulsion
  - self-harm
  - chronic stress and inflammation
  - isolation
  - eating disorders
  - suicidal ideation

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- Rebuild trust and safety
  - Encourage children to pursue activities they like
  - Minimize media exposure
  - Engaging child
  - Acknowledging and validating children concerns
  - Reassuring child

# GROUP COUNSELING

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- Sharing of problem in a group of similar situations. It is helpful in adolescence stage.
- Types of group counseling; situational (information sharing about stress, sharing mutual feelings etc), structured groups (role plays, drawings, collages), workshop ( movie screening, explore values and assumptions about marriage, develop communication skills)
- Individual counseling- It is for the young children or the children who cannot work in group. It also helps in release of emotions, the development of coping skills and ability to dealing with stress.