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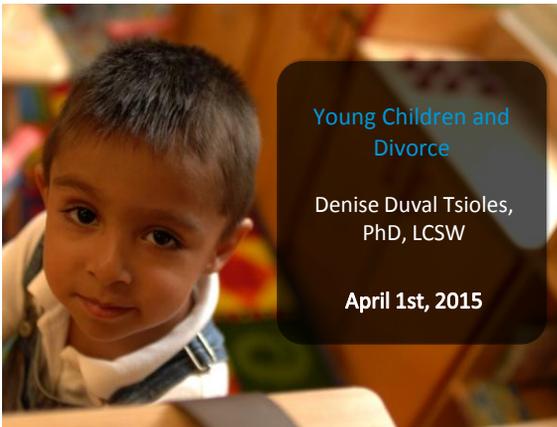
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### WebEx How-To

You will automatically be connected the Audio Broadcast with your computer



Ask questions in the Q&A panel

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### Denise Duval Tsioles, Ph.D., LCSW



- Founder and Clinical Director of Child Therapy Chicago
- Psychodynamically Oriented Child Play Therapist
- Faculty Member/Instructor - Institute for Clinical Social Work
- PhD in Clinical Social Work
- Advanced Clinical Training in Child Development




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## Young Children and Divorce

with Denise Duval Tsoles, PhD, LCSW



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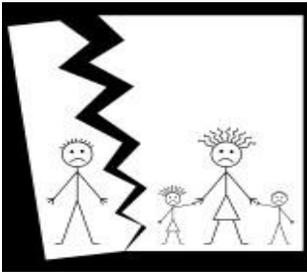
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### Introduction



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### Who is in the audience?

- Social Workers, Counselors, Psychologists
- Developmental Therapists
- Occupational or Physical Therapists
- Speech Therapists
- Educators
- Parents
- Who Else?

Type your response in the Q&A panel



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### Poll Question

How many possible results come up when doing a web search for "young children and divorce?"

- A) 2.7 million
- B) 14.5 million
- C) 28.8 million

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### What Children Need

Children need these things to grow and develop:

- Sense of safety and security
- Responsive, warm, patient caregivers
- Consistency and predictability
- Boundaries and structure



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### What Children Need (cont.)

Children who have these positive experiences:

- Develop a cohesive, coherent sense of self
- Develop the capacity to manage their emotions
- Have good relationships
- Exhibit appropriate behaviors
- Perform well in school and other external settings



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## What Happens During Divorce

When parents are fighting, separated, or divorced, these positive experiences that children need for healthy growth and development may be minimal or absent, at least for awhile.



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## Children's Experience of Divorce

### Feelings in the Moment:

|                       |                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Anger</i>          | <i>Abandonment</i>                 |
| <i>Hurt</i>           | <i>Rejection</i>                   |
| <i>Sadness</i>        | <i>Numbness</i>                    |
| <i>Emptiness</i>      | <i>Guilt/Shame/Worthlessness</i>   |
| <i>Loneliness</i>     | <i>Powerless/Helpless/Hopeless</i> |
| <i>Fear</i>           | <i>Confusion/Desperation</i>       |
| <i>Confusion</i>      | <i>Relief</i>                      |
| <i>Disappointment</i> | <i>Calm</i>                        |
| <i>Grief</i>          | <i>Freedom</i>                     |

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## Children's Experience of Divorce (cont.)



<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lbTFZ8cvHo4>

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### Children's Experience of Divorce(cont.)



Divorce can affect children developmentally and psychologically and their feelings come out in their behaviors.

- Developmental Considerations:
- Infants and pre-verbal children (birth to age 3)
  - Pre-school aged children (ages 3-5)
  - Early school aged children (ages 5-7)
  - Latency aged children (ages 7-12)

- May see changes in:
- eating
  - sleeping
  - managing emotions
  - thinking
  - behaviors
  - relationships



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### Children's Experience of Divorce(cont.)

Psychological Considerations:

- Egocentrism
- Self Worth
- Power and Control
- Guilt and Shame
- Fear of Loss
- Resentment and Withdrawal
- Become a Caretaker or Partner



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### Parents' Experience of Divorce

Feelings in the Moment:

|                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Anger/Hostility/Rage</i> | <i>Fear</i>                       |
| <i>Frustration</i>          | <i>Rejection</i>                  |
| <i>Betrayal</i>             | <i>Resentment</i>                 |
| <i>Sadness</i>              | <i>Guilt/Shame/Worthlessness</i>  |
| <i>Abandonment</i>          | <i>Powerless/Helpless/Failure</i> |
| <i>Loss</i>                 | <i>Confusion/Desperation</i>      |
| <i>Embarrassment</i>        | <i>Relief</i>                     |
| <i>Numbness</i>             | <i>Excitement</i>                 |
| <i>Surprise/Shock</i>       | <i>Freedom</i>                    |



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### Parent's Experience of Divorce (cont.)

- Feelings are elicited from the past
- Physical and other emotional issues
- Concrete concerns
- Acting out behaviors



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### How to Help Parents Manage Marital Discord, Separation, or Divorce

- Self reflection
- Self care
- Use support systems
- Avoid negativity
- Focus on the children
- Be flexible
- Establish a business-like relationship
- Follow through

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### How to Help Children Manage Marital Discord, Separation, or Divorce

- Age appropriate communication
- Allow for feelings and self expression
- Acknowledge behaviors
- Provide reassurance
- Be extra patient, calm, and attentive
- Be flexible
- Build in opportunities for working through
- Stay in charge
- Maintain routines
- Allow for some input
- Support the other parent's relationship with the children
- Avoid negativity
- Keep the children out of the middle

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### Ways to Keep Children Out of the Middle



- Go directly to the other parent for information and answers
- Do not bad mouth the other parent in the child's presence
- Do not participate in the child's angry feelings about the other parent
- Encourage the child to speak about his/her difficulties with the other parent to that parent
- Do not ask the child about the other parent's life or circumstances
- Do not ask the child to keep secrets

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### Play Therapy

Value of play therapy for children and parents:

- Safe space for parents
- Support and empowerment for parents
- Teaches child development and potential impact of divorce
- Play allows the child to "work through" feelings
- Play gives the child control and the ability to effect change
- Allows the child a space free from the need to protect the parents and without fear of creating worry or being "abandoned"

**erikson** [http://youtu.be/h\\_KikseplbE](http://youtu.be/h_KikseplbE)  
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### Discussion and Conclusions

Thoughts?

Questions?

**Source:**

Baxter, J., Weston, R. & Qui, L. (2011). Family structure, co-parental relationship quality, post-separation paternal involvement and children's emotional well-being. *Journal of Family Studies*, 17(2), pp.86-109.

**Resources:**

See Handout – available at:  
[http://coursemedia.erikson.edu:81/eriksononline/WebEx/Webinars/Spring15/4-1-15\\_ChildrenAndDivorce\\_Resources.pdf](http://coursemedia.erikson.edu:81/eriksononline/WebEx/Webinars/Spring15/4-1-15_ChildrenAndDivorce_Resources.pdf)

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## Q & A



Denise Duval Tsiolis, PhD, LCSW

Child Therapy Chicago  
1300 W. Belmont Ave., #215  
Chicago, IL 60657  
773-880-1485  
Denise@ChildTherapyChicago.com  
www.ChildTherapyChicago.com

Ask questions in the Q&A panel



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## Upcoming Webinars

**Ethical Social Work Practice in Uncertain Times Part 1**  
with Tonya Bibbs, Ph.D.  
May 13, 2015 10:00 am-11:30am CST

**Ethical Social Work Practice in Uncertain Times Part 2**  
with Tonya Bibbs, Ph.D.  
May 20, 2015 10:00 am-11:30am CST

Check out our complete offerings  
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