The Anchor Fact Sheet 2

Indicators of distress in CHILDREN

The following are indicators of distress in children who are having difficulty adjusting to parental separation/conflict

Their behaviour has changed:

➢ Openly teary, fragile and sensitive when corrected
➢ Having problems making and keeping friends
➢ Suddenly getting into fights with other children, a short fuse or quick to anger
➢ Less cooperative in the classroom, defiant and often angry
➢ Anxious, more clingy/demanding/attention seeking of their teacher
➢ Fearful, withdrawn, not talking about what’s happening in their family
➢ More distracted, unable to listen to direction or participate
➢ Behaving in “odd” ways that give cause for concern, e.g. talking to themselves, drawing pictures of death, obsessively wearing an item of clothing or carrying something, marginalising themselves from the class or their friends
➢ Making up “stories” about their family and who they live with
➢ Decline in hygiene or self-care, signs of neglect (e.g. no packed lunch, dirty clothes)
➢ Missing school or arriving late repeatedly, tired in class
➢ Refusing to see one of their parents, highly moral and judgemental
➢ Less completion of tasks and homework than usual
➢ Disinterest in previously enjoyed activities, hobbies, sports, games
➢ Avoidant of adults, refusing to talk at all
➢ Having trouble thinking about the solutions to problems (overwhelmed by small issues)
➢ Acting as the class “clown”, making light of everything
➢ Very eager to please, distressed when they make a small mistake, e.g. in their written work
➢ Loss in self confidence

Indicators of distress in ADOLESCENTS

Indicators of distress in adolescents who are having difficulty adjusting to parental separation/conflict

Their behaviour has changed:

➢ Openly distressed in class, emotionally fragile or volatile.
➢ Increasingly withdrawn, non-communicative
➢ Depressed, lethargic, not sleeping, shutting down
➢ Self-harming, cutting
➢ Suicidal or with suicidal ideation
➢ Suddenly getting into fights with other, angry with peers
➢ Less cooperative in class, defiant and more angry at teachers
➢ Reluctant to talk about their family, or becoming emotional when they do
➢ More distracted, generally not participating
➢ Behaving in ‘odd’ ways that give cause for concern, e.g. talking to themselves, drawing pictures or writing poems of death, obsessively wearing an item of clothing, marginalising themselves from their friends
➢ Lying about their family and who they live with
➢ Declining hygiene and self-care
➢ Missing school or arriving late repeatedly, tired in class
➢ Refusing to see one of their parents, highly moral and judgemental
➢ Loss of friends, breaking up with girl/boyfriends
➢ Less completion of tasks and homework than usual
➢ Risk-taking behaviours, truancy, or jigging school, spiralling behaviour
➢ Alcohol or other drug use
➢ Sexual acting out

**The Anchor - Supporting kids through separation**

For more information contact our customer service team on Ph 1800 864 846 email [ask@uniting.org](mailto:ask@uniting.org) or contact The Anchor at one of our Uniting Counselling and Mediation Centres:

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