

friends. Strangers may make thoughtless comments and talk about the children as though they were not members of the family. It is vital that family members declare to others that this is their child and a cherished member of the family.

In international adoptions, the medical information the parents receive may be incomplete or sketchy; weight, height, and head circumference are often the only objective information present in the child's medical record. Many internationally adopted children were born prematurely, and common health problems, such as infant diarrhea and malnutrition, delay growth and development. Some children have serious or multiple health problems that can be stressful for the parents.

## Parenting and Divorce

Since the mid-1960s, a marked change in the stability of families has been reflected in increased rates of divorce, single parenthood, and remarriage. In 2011, the divorce rate for the United States was 3.4 per 1000 total population ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011](#)). The divorce rate has changed little since 1987. In the decade before that, the rate increased yearly, with a peak in 1979. Although almost half of all divorcing couples are childless, it is estimated that more than 1 million children experience divorce each year.

The process of divorce begins with a period of marital conflict of varying length and intensity, followed by a separation, the actual legal divorce, and the reestablishment of different living arrangements ([Box 2-4](#)). Because a function of parenthood is to provide for the security and emotional welfare of children, disruption of the family structure often engenders strong feelings of guilt in the divorcing parents ([Fig. 2-4](#)).

### **Box 2-4**

## **The Divorce Process**

### **Acute Phase**

- The married couple makes the decision to separate.