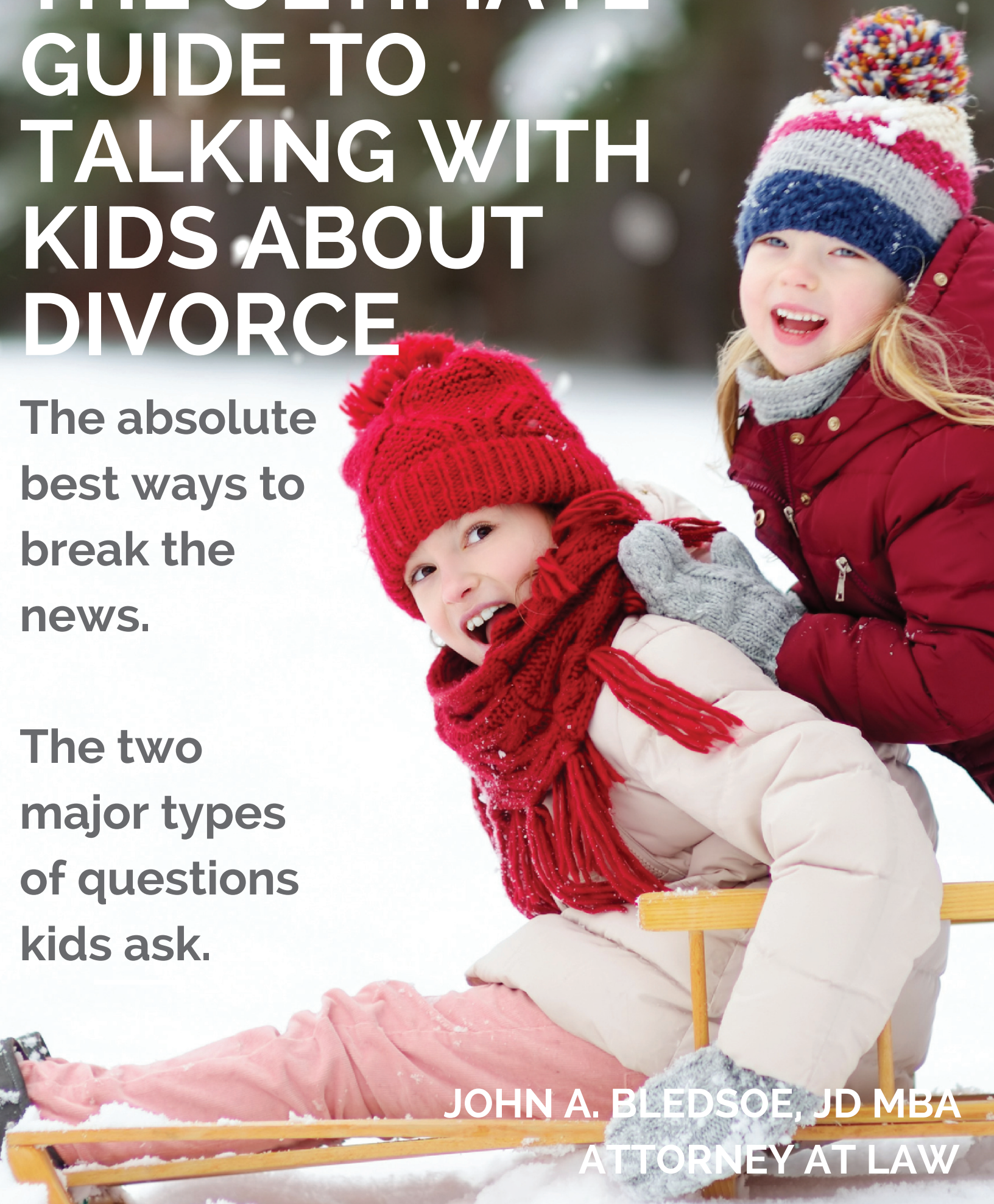


# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT DIVORCE

The absolute  
best ways to  
break the  
news.

The two  
major types  
of questions  
kids ask.

JOHN A. BLEDSOE, JD MBA  
ATTORNEY AT LAW



## CONTENTS

CONTENT NOTE & DISCLAIMER .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
WHEN SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT IT? .....	4
CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME TO DELIVER THE NEWS .....	4
HOW DO WE DO IT? .....	6
MAKE A PLAN WITH YOUR EX AND PRESENT A UNITED FRONT .....	6
HOW MUCH DO THEY NEED TO KNOW? .....	8
SPEAK CAREFULLY, IF IN DOUBT, DON'T SAY IT .....	8
BEING PREPARED WITH ANSWERS .....	10
THE TWO MAJOR QUESTIONS KIDS ASK .....	10
WHY ARE YOU GETTING DIVORCED? .....	11
ANSWERING THE FIRST MAJOR QUESTION KIDS ASK .....	11
WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME NOW? .....	13
ANSWERING THE SECOND MAJOR QUESTION KIDS ASK .....	13
CONCLUSION .....	15
ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....	17

---

LAW OFFICES OF JOHN A. BLEDSOE

(949) 363-5551 <http://www.justfamilylaw.com> Page 1

#### CONTENT NOTE & DISCLAIMER

*This report is made available by the law firm publisher for educational purposes only. Although this publication contains information to give you a general understanding of the topic, it does not provide specific legal advice.*

*By reading this report, you understand that there is no attorney client relationship between you and the publisher.*

*This report should not be used as a substitute for competent legal advice from a licensed professional attorney in your state.*

## INTRODUCTION

Telling your kids you have decided to divorce is a difficult conversation few parents feel fully prepared for. There's no easy way to have this conversation, but there is a right way and a wrong way to do it.

Avoiding common pitfalls and following the tips in this book will help you minimize the stress and trauma your children feel when talking about divorce.

## WHEN SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT IT?

### CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME TO DELIVER THE NEWS

Don't bring up divorce in front of your children until you are reasonably certain that you actually will be divorcing your spouse. If both parties are still working to save the marriage in good faith, it's probably unwise to bring up a possible divorce to your children.

On the other hand, once it becomes certain that separation and/or divorce are on the horizon, it's probably not a good idea to delay the conversation too long either. **If possible, you want to give your children time to overcome the initial shock, ask questions, and integrate the news into their new**

**reality before major things happen (such as either parent moving out).**

**Don't deliver the news right before bed or before they need to leave for school!**

Think about your family's schedule and what time you could deliver the news where they will have the most time to recover and process it uninterrupted. For example, you might sit down with them on a Friday afternoon as soon as they get home from school for the weekend.



## HOW DO WE DO IT?

### MAKE A PLAN WITH YOUR EX AND PRESENT A UNITED FRONT

If possible, you should make a plan with your ex to present a united front. If the two of you can prepare and deliver the news together in a loving and calm manner, that is the ideal! It sets the stage for a healthy coparenting relationship and shows your children that the two of you can continue to function together where they are concerned.

They will have questions, and the two of you need to have anticipated that and agreed upon a script of how these questions will be answered ahead of time!

Some children learn of their parent's divorce with each parent delivering a separate story, negative

feelings, and answers about the future that don't match what the child's other parent said. **This is a perfect recipe for trauma.**

No matter what has transpired between you and your ex-spouse, unless there is a concern of physical safety or abuse, you ought to do everything possible to deliver the news together with calm, loving, and united front.



## HOW MUCH DO THEY NEED TO KNOW?

SPEAK CAREFULLY, IF IN DOUBT, DON'T SAY IT

It's tempting to let our emotions get the better of us. One wrong decision about what to say could permanently harm your child. For example, if the cause of marital separation is more clearly the fault of your ex due to infidelity or some other cause, it's natural to want to express your anger and speak the truth about what has happened. You must resist this impulse.

If at all possible, your child needs a continued healthy and positive relationship with both parents. Don't say anything that will undermine your child's relationship with the other parent, even if it's true!

Speak with a trusted friend, professional

---

LAW OFFICES OF JOHN A. BLEDSOE

(949) 363-5551 <http://www.justfamilylaw.com> Page 8

counselor, or clergy member to get the support you need. Resist any urge to "vent" to your kids.

**Honesty is important, but children don't have the right to know every detail of adult life. A good rule of thumb is to be honest with your kids, but where possible spare them any details that could compromise their relationship or perception of either parent.**

Once you say something to your children, there are no take backs, they may remember your words forever. Speak carefully, your children's emotional and mental health depends on it!

## BEING PREPARED WITH ANSWERS

### THE TWO MAJOR QUESTIONS KIDS ASK

Inevitably, the questions children in every age group ask initially will usually boil down to a variation of one of these two major questions:

1. Why is this happening?
2. What is going to happen now?

The next two sections discuss ways to answer these questions.

## WHY ARE YOU GETTING DIVORCED?

### ANSWERING THE FIRST MAJOR QUESTION KIDS ASK

The first major type of question kids will ask centers around searching for reasons why the divorce is happening.

Your job is to be ready for these 'why' questions, and have an age appropriate response ready that honestly answers the question. It's also a good idea to reassure your kids that they are not to blame for what has happened.

You might say something like

*"Sometimes adults who get married have problems that mean they can't be happy living together anymore. This can happen when grown-ups disagree, and it doesn't have anything to do with you or anything that you did."*

*Even though the feelings your mom and I had for each other changed, the love your mom and I have for you is a different and more special kind of love that can't change."*

---

LAW OFFICES OF JOHN A. BLEDSOE

(949) 363-5551 <http://www.justfamilylaw.com> Page 11

*We will both always love you and take care of you. We are changing the way we live to help us all be happy and healthy."*

## WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME NOW?

### ANSWERING THE SECOND MAJOR QUESTION KIDS ASK

The other type of questions kids will naturally ask are about the future. They will want to know what's happening next, where they (and you) will live, where they will go to school, and what other changes may be coming.

Of course, the difficult part of this conversation is that you may not know the answers to some or all of these questions! **Resist the urge to make promises about things that remain uncertain.**

Kids who ask these questions are seeking stability and security, but a reassurance unwisely given that erodes their trust in you will end up doing

much more harm in the long term. As an example, don't promise that they will live with you in the same house unless you are reasonably certain that this will be the case.

**Instead of assuaging their fears by making guarantees, honestly let them know what you don't know and include reassurances of what you do know.** Let's go through some examples.

Question	How you might answer
Where are we going to live?	"Right now we are still living in this house. Your father is going to find a new apartment that will also have space for you when you see him. No matter where it is, your father and I will make sure you have your own space and a good place to live."
Will I still be going to the same school?	"I don't know if you will need to change schools at some point. We hope not and we will try to arrange things so you can keep going to the same school. If you do have to change schools, mother and I will make sure you still get the chance to go see your friends from your old school."



## CONCLUSION

In summary, remember the following principles:

1. Keep your responses age appropriate and simple.
2. Pick the right time to broach the subject.
3. Be honest, but don't disclose details that could harm parent-child relationships.
4. By showing a unified front with your ex, you demonstrate and reassure your children that you will lovingly coparent them.
5. Have good answers to the 'why' and 'what now' questions ready.

6. Don't be afraid to admit what you don't know, while lovingly reassuring them of what will remain constant.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*John A. Bledsoe began practicing family law in 1991. Since then, he has practiced throughout the state of California, been sworn in before the Supreme Court of the United States of America, and become an expert in divorce and family law matters.*

*His expertise has been recognized formally by the State Bar of California, who named him as a certified family law specialist (an elite sector of family law attorneys designated by the State Bar).*

*Mr. Bledsoe also has a Master's of Business Administration degree in finance. He brings a special expertise to the complex financial matters found in many family law cases. He has tried several hundred family law matters and settled hundreds more. Mr. Bledsoe is the father of five*

*daughters and a son. He has been married to his wife, Debra,  
for over thirty-five years.*

*Our firm offers a confidential initial case evaluation. Call  
(949) 363-5551 to learn more.*