

# Solo Parenting: Divorce with Children



By Cynthia MacGregor for Hope After Divorce

Celebrity moms Tori Spelling and Kendra Wilkinson are both contemplating divorce due to their unfaithful husbands Dean McDermott and Hank Baskett. They have a lot to consider and process before making the life-changing decision to divorce. Not only will it change their own lives, but it will change their children's lives. They say divorce changes who children are – and that's a very serious reality we parents must not take lightly. A second chance is certainly worth the effort when kids are concerned, as long as there is no abuse happening (physical, emotional, or mental) in the home.

If Spelling and Wilkinson do end up divorcing their husbands, here is a reality check of what they will be facing as divorced parents with young children. Learning to respectfully co-parent together is essential for the well-being of their kids.

Now that you're divorced – or perhaps you're still going through the legalities of the divorce process, but at any rate, you and your husband no longer share a roof or a bed – the dynamics of your family have changed. Whether you have one child or more, it's just you and your child or children, and you've likely become aware that they're interacting with you in different ways than before.

**Related Link:** [Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce](#)

How? Well, actually there are several possibilities, but they mainly fall into two categories. One is that they seem to be clingy and staying closer to you than ever before. The other is that they are distancing themselves from you. How can two opposite reactions result from the same circumstances? Easy! Different personalities perceive the divorce with different sets of eyes...and, accordingly, react differently.

**Clingy:** Kids who fall into this group are afraid that you'll leave him too. Being self-centered, a child will perceive the divorce in terms of Daddy having left him rather than this being between Dad and you. The child will cling tightly to you to avoid this fear.

**Distancing:** Again, the child perceives the divorce in terms of Daddy having left him and is afraid you'll leave him next, but this child, having a different personality, distances himself from you rather than clings to you. His methodology is to get used to losing you before it happens, so that when you leave him, it won't catch him by surprise and hurt as badly as when Daddy left.

Then, there is the child – typically a little older – who

comprehends that the divorce was between you and Daddy but blames you for making Daddy leave. This child will distance himself from you out of anger.

The child may also act out as well as being cold and distant because he is testing you. He is trying to see if you will leave if he does his best to push you away. He doesn't really *want* you to leave; he's just testing you to see if you will.

**Related Link:** [Source Says Kendra Wilkinson Is Going 'Back and Forth' About Divorce Decision](#)

**Togetherness:** A few visits to a good therapist who specializes in children or families may be in order, but there are things you can do on your own as well.

- Have another talk with the child. Kids don't always "get" the concept of divorce the first time it's explained to them. Your child needs to understand that Daddy didn't "leave him" and that, even if you were the one who asked for the divorce, it's not as cut-and-dry as "it's your fault." And above all, he needs to understand that you're not going to leave him – ever.
- Get involved in a project with the child. Any kind of project will do: scrapbooking, redecorating his room, a knitting or crocheting project, or a gardening project – anything that will have you two working closely together.
- Be yourself, unchanged and unchanging. Show the child through your actions that you are still Mom. You are still loving; you have not changed; and you are not going anywhere – no matter what happens and no matter how the child behaves.

Time will help heal the situation. You can do your part to make it better too. As with so much else in parenting, patience is called for, but by now, you should be an old hand at that.



*Cynthia MacGregor is a multi-published author. She has over 100 books to her credit. They include "After Your Divorce," "Divorce Helpbook for Kids," "Divorce Helpbook for Teens," "Solo Parenting," "'Step This Way," and others. Forthcoming books include "The One-Parent Family," "Why Are Mommy and Daddy Getting Divorced," and "Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore." She hosted and produced the TV show "Solo Parenting," which was broadcasted in South Florida over WHDT.*

*Cynthia writes for [HopeAfterDivorce.org](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org), [FamilyShare.com](http://FamilyShare.com) and [LAFamily.com](http://LAFamily.com). Contact Cynthia at [Cynthia@cynthiamacgregor.com](mailto:Cynthia@cynthiamacgregor.com).*

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## **Going Solo Again: Bold New Beginnings**





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Ah...we're moving into a new year, and don't we all love new beginnings? It feels like a fresh start, a new chance, a do-over. It feels like an opportunity to "get it right this time." The reality is that we can make a new beginning, a fresh start, *any* time. We don't need a special date marked in red on the calendar or a month that we know is at the head of a whole fresh year.

I've never believed in New Year's resolutions, but that doesn't mean I'm against making a fresh start. I just don't confine such activities to the first month of the calendar year. For instance, the beginning of spring is a time of rebirth. Your birthday is always a good day to re-evaluate your life and see what needs re-calibrating. In truth, *any* time is a good time to begin anew.

**Related Link:** [Finding Yourself Again](#)

The point of this column, then, is to advise you *not* to limit your new beginnings to the start of the new year. Now, I am

not telling you not to make a fresh start now. I am just telling you that, if your life is not satisfactory or it feels like things have grown stale, *any* time is a good time to take matters in your own hands and *do something about it*.

You did that when you got divorced, assuming you were the one who initiated the split. Your marriage was – for whatever reason – not what you wanted it to be. And instead of “putting up with it,” you did something about it. You got divorced – a bold step, especially if it also meant that you would be raising your kids pretty much single-handedly from here on out.

Josh Brolin and Diane Lane are one A-list couple who recently broke up. They were introduced in 2002 by Brolin’s stepmother, Barbra Streisand, and the two married in 2004. After being married for eight years, they announced their split last February. Sources reported them stating, “This was a hard decision for both of them to make; the relationship just ran its course.”

**Related Link:** [Josh Brolin and Diane Lane Are Officially Divorced](#)

Maybe now you’re finding that being a solo, like Brolin and Lane, is a tougher gig than you anticipated. What you shouldn’t do is find the first available unmarried male and hitch up with him just so you’ll have help with the kids. Does the phrase “out of the frying pan and into the fire” resonate with you?

The same is true in other areas of your life too. Don’t assume that any change is automatically a change for the better. Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn’t. Maybe the change resolves one problem or set of problems but dumps a whole different problem or set into your lap and your life instead.

What are you unhappy with in your life right now? Is your income too low even with the child support money? What can you

do about it? Can you switch jobs? Do you want to go back to school and study for a whole new career that pays better? Or do you want to approach your employer about a raise?

Do you see too little of your kids because you work eight hours a day and also have to figure in commuting time? Is it time to think of a job at which you can telecommute from home? Maybe it's time to be really bold and start a business of your own from home.

Is your home unsatisfactory for whatever reason: too small, too difficult to maintain, dicey neighborhood, inconvenient location, or simply too many memories of when you lived there with your former husband? It may be time to move to a different place – even a rental house or apartment where the landlord or building super is responsible for repairs and upkeep and all that falls on your shoulders is housecleaning. Or a large house you can share with another single mom who can help you with childcare, cooking, housecleaning, and expenses. Don't assume that, just because you're living now in a single-family dwelling that you own, you should confine your search for a new home only to another single-family dwelling you own. Be bold! What other arrangement would work better for you?

**Related Link:** [Maintaining a Positive Image During Divorce](#)

Are you dating a man you know you have no future with, just so you have “someone” in your life? Sure, that type of situation offers you companionship and perhaps other advantages as well. (Does he help with the kids? Fix things around the house for you? Make himself useful in other ways?) But if you don't love him – or even if you do, but you realize he's not your best choice in a life partner – now's as good a time as any to end the relationship. If you don't, it will be harder to meet your Mr. Right.

It's the start of a new year and a good time for new beginnings – but remember, as 2014 unfolds for you, that *any*

time is a good time for new beginnings. Whenever you aren't happy with the status quo, stop and consider just what you could do to improve the situation at hand. Think creatively. Think outside the box. Be bold. And make the best of this year all through the year!

*For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).*



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