

## Winners and Losers in Divorce

A divorce may also create a story in the child that there was a winner and loser after the divorce and that one parent is in greater need of support than is the other. This can happen if one of the parents remarries and the other never does, or when the financial status of one of the parents worsens after the divorce while the other's either stays the same or improves.

It may also occur if the divorce causes one of the parents to become more psychologically troubled after the divorce. Marriage may sometimes conceal the dysfunction of one of the parents or it may allow them to function at a higher level than they are capable of as a single person or single parent. Thus, it's not uncommon that, after a divorce, a parent's psychological vulnerabilities or frailties become more pronounced.

They may also look more pronounced to the child because the healthier parent compensated for the other parent's inadequacies by overcompensating. For example, a highly organized parent may conceal or limit the damage of a disorganized parent. Or an emotionally resilient parent may conceal or limit the damage of a parent who is emotionally far less resilient.

In addition, family life requires that parents often take on different roles. It may work in a family if one parent is much more hands on, worried about the children's homework and goals, closely monitors them (typically mothers) while the other parent isn't as worried, has more of a "they'll work it out attitude" and just enjoys them as children (more typically true of fathers). In this situation, the children get the best of both worlds. However, after a divorce the father's (when that role is played by fathers) laissez-faire attitude may mean that a lot more of the details fall through the cracks in the child's life, and that the mother's (typically) high level of involvement and often, anxiety about the details now feels suffocating and intrusive to the child.

**Any of these factors may increase the risk of estrangement in a young or grown child.**