

Broken Family

A broken family consists of a biological family that has separated for specific reasons that may result in single-parent families, stepfamilies, or blended families.

A family in which one parent is absent, usually due to divorce or desertion.

A broken family is a family that has split or separated due to a variety of reasons. This leads to children being raised by single parents, stepparents or others not related to the biological parents.

Broken families can result from separation due illness, divorce or other issues. The break-up of a family has many negative impacts on the children. The children are more likely to act out against siblings, biological parents or stepparents. Children also develop emotional issues, such as anger, resentment, loneliness and depression, due to the change in the family unit.

The effect of a broken family on child development

A broken family can negatively affect all domains of your child's development.

A broken family can negatively affect all domains of your child's development. The effects of a broken family on a child's development depend on numerous factors, including the age of the child at the time of parents' separation, and on the personality and family relationships. Although infants and young children may experience few negative developmental effects, older children and teenagers may experience some problems in their social, emotional and educational functioning.

Emotional

After a divorce, children from pre-school through late adolescence can

experience deficits in emotional development. Children of all ages may seem tearful or depressed, which is a state that can last for several years after a child's parents' have separated, explains psychologist Lori Rappaport. Additionally, some older children may show very little emotional reaction to their parents' divorce. According to Lori Rappaport, this may not be developmentally beneficial. Some children who show little emotional response are actually bottling up their negative feelings. This emotional suppression makes it difficult for parents, teachers and therapists to help the child process her feelings in developmentally appropriate ways.

Educational

Slowed academic development is another common way that separation of the parents affects children. The emotional stress of a divorce alone can be enough to stunt your child's academic progress, but the lifestyle changes and instability of a broken family can contribute to poor educational outcomes. This poor academic progress can stem from a number of factors, including instability in the home environment, inadequate financial resources and inconsistent routines.

Social

Divorce affects children's social relationships in several ways. First, some children act out their distress about their broken family by acting aggressive and by engaging in bullying behaviour, both of which can negatively affect peer relationships. Other children may experience anxiety, which can make it difficult for them to seek positive social interactions and engage in developmentally beneficial activities such as teen sports. Teens from broken families might develop a cynical attitude toward relationships and harbour feelings of mistrust, both toward their parents and potential partners.

Family dynamics

By its very nature, divorce, changes not only the structure of the family but also its dynamics. Even if you and your spouse have an amicable divorce, simply creating two new households permanently alters family interactions and roles. Based on the new living arrangements, your children may need to perform more chores and assume additional roles in the new household's basic functioning. Additionally, in some broken families, older children may take on a parental-type role when interacting with younger siblings because of their parents' work schedules or inability to be present in the way that the parents were before the divorce.