

Effects of Separation/Divorce/Relational Conflict on Children

In utero – too much cortisol **in the womb** effects brain development and can cause learning delays or disabilities— but if the very **stress** that caused Mom to overproduce cortisol during pregnancy also keeps her from bonding, it may compound her baby's problems. Risk factors include reactive attachment disorder due to continued conflicts.

Birth – 3yrs - crying bedwetting, eating/sleeping problems.

3-6yrs - thumb sucking, bedwetting, attachment issues, self-blame, school problems, try to be perfect, possessiveness, worry over daily needs.

6-10yrs - anxiety about abandonment, sadness, anger, wishes and dreams of reconciliation, stomach ache, headaches, school issues, conflicted loyalties, “parent playing”, deprivation concerns.

10- 13yrs - security of future concerns, powerlessness and despair, financial worry, feeling rejected, urge to grow up too fast, desire to understand parental conflict clearly, siding with a parent, anger, feeling responsible for household members.

13-18yrs – worry about: money, family, home and school. Violence, promiscuity, eating disorders, depression, anger towards perceived “offending “ parent, protecting perceived victims, anger and embarrassment of parent relational issues, moralistic-judgmental thinking, withdraw, isolation, relying on peers for support and problem solving, argumentative attitude, risk taking, drugs/alcohol/ suicide.

