

THE SHARP rise in divorce rates alarmed the nation during the 1970s and early 1980s. Some researchers predicted that *half* of all children would spend part of their childhoods in single-parent homes. Others reported that children from single-parent homes had more problems in school. People worried that growing up in a single-parent home was risky business.

New studies, however, show little or no difference in the school achievement of children from similar backgrounds in one-parent and two-parent families. "From similar backgrounds" is the key phrase. The early studies failed to look at single-parent upbringing within a given income bracket.

Recent studies, however, do show divorce to be a traumatic event for children. But they also show that most children adjust well enough, after a time. Communication, warmth, and structure from adults are the things that build a strong family. And that applies to both single-parent and two-parent families.

What can you do about school if your family must deal with divorce? You can help make sure that school is a source of help. During the first weeks, let your children's teachers know about the crisis in your family. Teachers, too, can provide warmth and structure, and some extra words of encouragement. Don't forget, many

Helping Your Children Put Divorce Behind Them



teachers may have gone through divorce themselves! Schools may also put you in touch with support or counseling groups. Teachers can recommend insightful library books for you and your children.

Expect the adjustment to take up to two years. Stay in touch with teachers and school counselors for that long—until everyone feels resettled and secure in the new family arrangement. Once things settle down, expect your children to do just as

well as those from two-parent families. Make sure that school people share your view.

Also, be sure to take part in as many school events as your schedule allows. That will show something to two groups: your children and their teachers. Taking part shows that you consider schooling *so important* that you save time for it in your obviously busy schedule.

Finally, remember this: Your child lives in a family that is a lot like many other families today. There is every reason to be optimistic about the outcome.

For more information, call the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS) toll-free at 1-800/624-9120. We can help direct you to other resources. To find out more about the ERIC system and its varied units and services, call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800/USE-ERIC. Staff of ERIC/CRESS prepared this article, based on information in the ERIC database.