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Too young to make decisions about living arrangements

Divorced single-parenting invades and interrupts your vision of family and conscripts a parent in the roles of travel agent and air traffic controller. Often, you think you don't so much rear children as track satellites. Divorced single-parenting is not ideal. It will never be entirely OK. There is very little normal about it. All the choices involve concessions to a lesser of evils. Hopefully lesser, anyway.

That said, now (and only now) are we free to do it well. No, moving every week doesn't harm children. Which isn't to say it's not tragic, unfair, inconvenient and exasperating. Does moving every week mean more time in cars and more time living out of duffel bags and less continuity in home life? Absolutely. But these losses, while real, are not what harms children of divorce.

Divorce is an extremely challenging conversation for children, and potentially might cause harm. Children of divorce need to see both parents working hard and continuing healthy relationships.

All adolescents, if reasonably healthy, are in a journey of gathering personal power to end of separation/individuation. Spending time with peers becomes increasingly a greater priority than attention to the bonds of family. Healthy families allow, in reasonable degree, a maturing teen to loosen the grip on parents and siblings, and provide enough "leash" to allow the exploration of a more independent world.

Much before age 15 or 16 it is discouraged for divorcing parents to ask children what they want or prefer in terms of custody. It might feel loving, modern and responsible, but in fact it puts children in a terrible bind, psychologically and emotionally. What children prefer, pales in comparison to what children need. They need you.

