

# **VICTORIOUS WOMAN OF THE MONTH**

## **JULY 2008**

∞ **ROSALIND SEDACCA** ∞

### **TELLING MY SON ABOUT THE DIVORCE**

I've faced many difficult moments in my life. But telling my son that I will be divorcing his father was absolutely one of the worst. Thinking about breaking the news filled me with dread. My son, after all, was innocent. He loved his father and me. He didn't deserve this.

I was anxious for weeks. When should I tell him? How? Should we tell him together? And what should we say?

How do you tell your child the life he has known is about to be changed – forever?

How do you explain that it's not his fault?

How do you reassure him that he will be safe and loved, even after the divorce?

My son was eleven at the time -- still a child, yet old enough to feel the tension escalating in our home. He heard the irritation when his father and I spoke ... the arguments that flared up in the midst of routine conversations ... the deafening silence when we were engulfed in our anger.

Not surprisingly, he began to show signs of stress. Headaches. Tears. Acting out, revealing his temper as he filled with rage about controlling a situation that was certainly beyond his control!

My husband and I knew better than to fight in front of our son. But as our unhappiness grew over time, we lost touch with what we knew and gave in to what we felt. It was a terrible mistake that I will always regret because the child I loved more than anyone in the universe, was paying the price.

I wrote a list of what was most important for me to tell my son about the divorce. I intuitively knew this was vital information to get across. But I didn't know how to say it. Or how to cope with my son's inevitable tears.

One night at 4 a.m. I remembered that my son always enjoyed looking through family photo albums. He liked seeing his baby pictures and watching the changes as he grew. The albums were like a story book of his life.

What if I prepared a photo album for him that told the story of our family -- in pictures and words -- spanning from before he was born up to the present, preparing him for the new changes ahead?

The storybook concept would give him something tangible to hold on to and read again and again to help him grasp what was about to transpire. It

would explain, in language he could understand, why this was happening including the six crucial points I knew I had to get across.

And, rather than rehearsing an awkward conversation, the storybook would give me a written script that was well thought through in advance.

When the book was completed I showed it to my husband. The message wasn't judgmental or accusatory. It focused on areas of mutual agreement. While he was angry with me for initiating our divorce, he agreed the book was well done.

The night came when we sat down with our son and I started reading. As I read about the changes in our family -- the tension and sad times -- tears pooled up in his eyes. At the end, he was crying and clinging to us both.

Together, as a family, we talked, cried, hugged, re-read passages and consoled one another. It was tough to go through. But having the book to hold on to and re-read was helpful for us all. We discussed the divorce many more times in the following weeks and referred back to the book as a reminder that everything will be okay.

The book also helped me and my husband to focus on our son rather than judgments and accusations. Life evolves. And beyond our differences and disappointments, we were still his Mom and Dad -- and always will be. We needed to treat each other with respect.

It's been more than a decade since I created that storybook. I have since remarried and my son has become a veterinarian. Although grown, he is still close to his parents. When I mentioned sharing my storybook concept with other parents facing divorce, he agreed it was a great idea. The divorce storybook concept has paid off for us all. It's the crowning achievement in my life.

### ***Congratulations, Rosalind!***

***We never know what life has in store and it means so much when we get help from someone who has walked the same path before us. Thank you for showing us a different and positive way to handle a difficult and trying experience.***

**Rosalind's book, *How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce?*, features fill-in-the-blank templates for parents to customize. Her son wrote the introduction. You can read more about it at [www.HowDoITelltheKids.com](http://www.HowDoITelltheKids.com) and [www.childcentereddivorce.com](http://www.childcentereddivorce.com)**