



Divorce...

Dealing with it: A Guide For Adults /
Parents and Young Children

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Note to Parents: Divorce is..

- A choice made by adults to dissolve a marriage that does not work anymore.
- It will be painful, stressful, sad, and may include feelings of anger and grief.
- For kids, it is different, as they never asked for or expected this. They do not understand why it happens, give them reassurance.

(Leavell, Hugh R., PhD. , P.A.)



Why Do Parents Divorce?



- May not love each other anymore
- May not be able to get along, although they may have tried
- Constant yelling, violent, noisy battles
- Feelings may have changed and they no longer want to be with one another.

What about the child?

- It is natural to feel
 - Sad
 - Angry
 - Confused
 - Ashamed
 - Guilty
 - Relieved
 - Worried about who will take care of you



What about the child?

- Bad feelings will NOT last forever
- It helps to talk about your feelings
- There are many things that you could do to feel better
 - It is okay to cry
 - Talk to your parents about your anger
 - Tell your parents if you are afraid or confused
 - Ask the judge questions
 - Talk with a counselor
 - It is ok to love both parents

After the Divorce

- Parents may change for the better – they may be calmer and nicer
- You may get to know each parent better
- Let each parent know that saying bad things about each other upsets you
- Do not carry messages between parents. Tell them to do it themselves.
- If you have to move and leave your friends, tell them what is going on ask if you could call them. You will meet new friends



Living with One Parent



- You may need to do things for yourself more often
- You may want to act babyish to get attention. It is better to avoid that type of behavior and ask for love and affection
- There may be less money than before, be prepared to give some things up
- There may be times when you miss your other parent, but you will still get to see him or her.



Visiting your Parent...

- You may seem uncomfortable visiting at first, but you will get used to it
- Your parents will want to know what is going on with you at school and with your friends. Talk with them, don't be shy
- One parent may want to shower you with expensive gifts, tell them you want their love and to have fun
- When visiting one parent and leaving another, it is okay to show your love for each in front of the other.



Having Two Homes...



- This can become confusing at first. Find favorite things you can do with each parent
- Make a schedule to keep up with when you stay at each parent's house and keep special keepsakes at each house
- The rules in each house may be different, try to respect them both.



Celebrating Holidays and Special Occasions...

- These events may not be the same and you may start to feel like you are being pulled apart. You may also have to adjust to spending events in different ways. Try to accept the changes and remain open.
- Remember both parents on holidays and try to send cards to let them know you are thinking of them.



Telling Your Friends

- Divorce may make you feel different from your friends, but you are still the same person
- It may be easier to tell your friends about the divorce one at a time
- A true friend will appreciate your honesty
- Spending time with your friends will help decrease the loneliness you may experience from time to time
- Remember ... you are not the only one whose parents are divorced



Meeting your Parents' New Friends...

- When your mother or father meets a new friend, you may feel jealous and want your parent to yourself
- If your parent goes out on a date you may have to stay with a babysitter and that is not so bad
- Be polite to the new friend. Give them a chance, you might eventually like them and they may become a new friend to you too

Living with Stepparents...

- A stepparent usually loves your mother or father just as much as you do. They are not trying to take the place of your mother or father, as they care about you and want to see you happy.
- You should also care about your stepparent
- Have patience, it may take a while for everyone to get used to each other's ways of doing things
- You and your stepparent should decide on a name you should call him or her that is comfortable for you both

Having Stepbrothers and Stepsisters

- You may feel invaded if you have to share a room.
- Try to agree on spaces and things that are private for each other.
- Learning to live with someone takes time. Don't be surprised if arguments occur in the beginning
- Regardless of how big your family is now, you will always be special



What Never Changes...

- Many things will change with divorce, BUT one thing that never changes is your parents' love for you!



Things to Remember...

The divorce is not your fault	It is ok to miss the parent who has moved out	You do not have to lose touch with the parent who moved out	It is okay to feel sad or angry	It's okay to cry and it is also okay not to cry	Your house may be a nicer place to live now
Even if you did not hear them fighting, they were unhappy with each other	You do not have to choose sides	If your parents seem unhappy with you, it is because of the tension they are feeling	They are both still your parents	Your parents are human	It's okay to like other people your parents start dating

Resources

Brown, L. K. and Brown, M. Dinosaurs divorce: A guide for changing families. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998.

Lazo, C. The facts about divorce. New York: Crestwood House, 1989.

MacGregor, C. The divorce helpbook for kids. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Stein, S. On divorce: An open family book for parents and children together. New York: Walker & Company, 1979.