

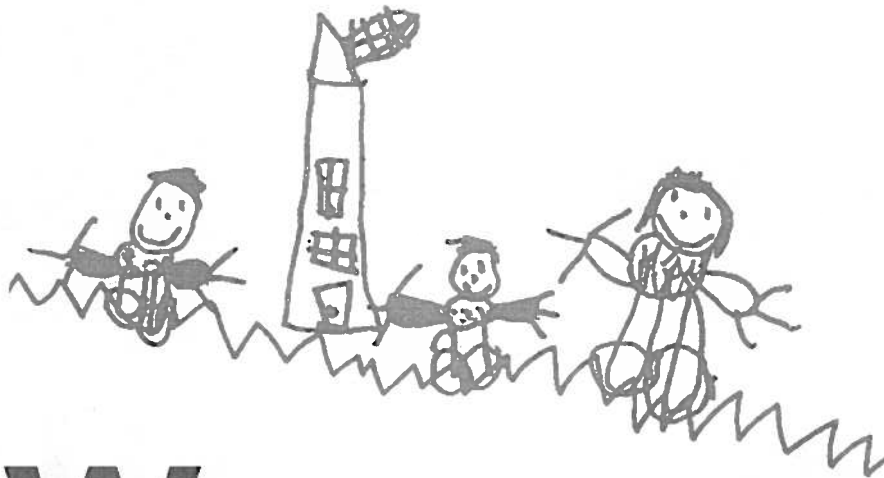
"I Think My Parents Are Getting DIVORCED"!

Are you feeling confused? Not sure what to do or who to talk to?

You're not alone - check out how other kids feel.



* Information in this handout has been taken from the Family Advocate - ABA - American Bar Association



When parents divorce, children and their parents have to get used to many changes, especially during the first year. While parents figure out how to make the family comfortable in two homes rather than one, children feel sad, angry, and uncertain about the changes in their lives and what's to come.

Find someone to talk to

Often your parents or another adult can help you feel more comfortable with your new life. Talk to a parent; teacher; aunt, uncle, or grandparent; or a friend of the family.

Usually, two people get divorced because they cannot get along. Sometimes it's obvious to everyone around them because they fight and argue all the time. Their long, late, noisy fights can give kids headaches.

Other parents just stop talking to each other. When the divorce finally comes, the kids are totally surprised. No matter how it happens, kids can get really, really **CONFUSED!!**

Your worries

Many kids wonder whether they will get new toys and clothes or have to split up their old ones between two homes. Kids also worry about where they are going to live—at Mom's or Dad's?

Kids wonder how their lives will change and what will remain the same. Will they move? Will they continue to see their friends? Will they always know where they are supposed to be? Will they change schools? Will they see both of their parents every day? Will they have as much money to do things?

WOW

It's Confusing!!!

Here are some of the most common feelings kids have about divorce.



Anger

Most kids feel angry when parents first separate. Kids also get angry when parents fight at their soccer games.

I hate it when Dad says mean things about Mom.

Sadness

Kids feel sad when they don't see Dad or Mom very much or when they have to move from their homes.

Loneliness

Some kids get very lonely because after the divorce their moms have to go to work instead of being at home after school like they always used to before the divorce.

It can also be lonely if you are at your mom's and your brother is staying at your dad's.

I miss Daddy. Why did they get divorced anyway?

Dear Mom and Dad,
Sometimes divorce feels like your
jumping of a ramp into a
pool of [redacted]
lava.



Relief

Even though nobody seems happy right after a divorce, it feels good when the fighting stops. And eventually, it will feel good to see Mom and Dad happy again.

Guilt

Many kids think the divorce is their fault. But divorce is something that adults do, and it is never kids' fault. Some kids even feel guilty when they are able to forget about the divorce for a few hours and laugh with their friends. Other kids feel guilty if they have to choose between living with Mom or Dad.

They always fought about me.

It must be my fault they got divorced.

Confusion

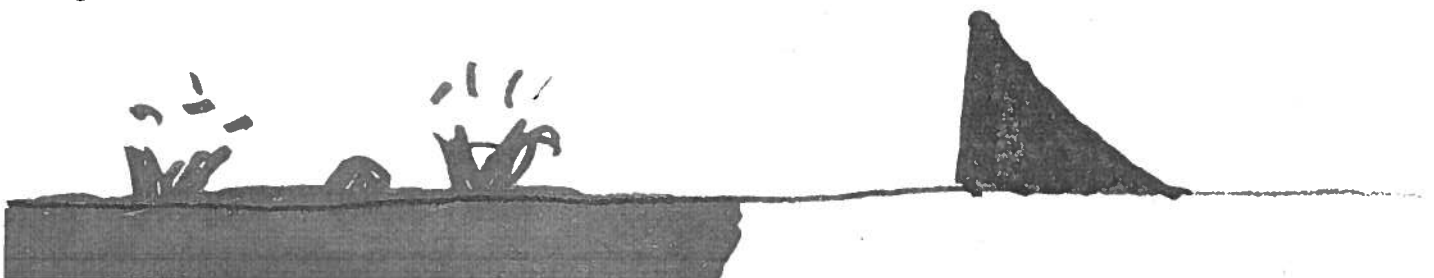
Kids don't know what to believe when parents say different things.

*Mom says Daddy's bad,
but I love and miss him.*

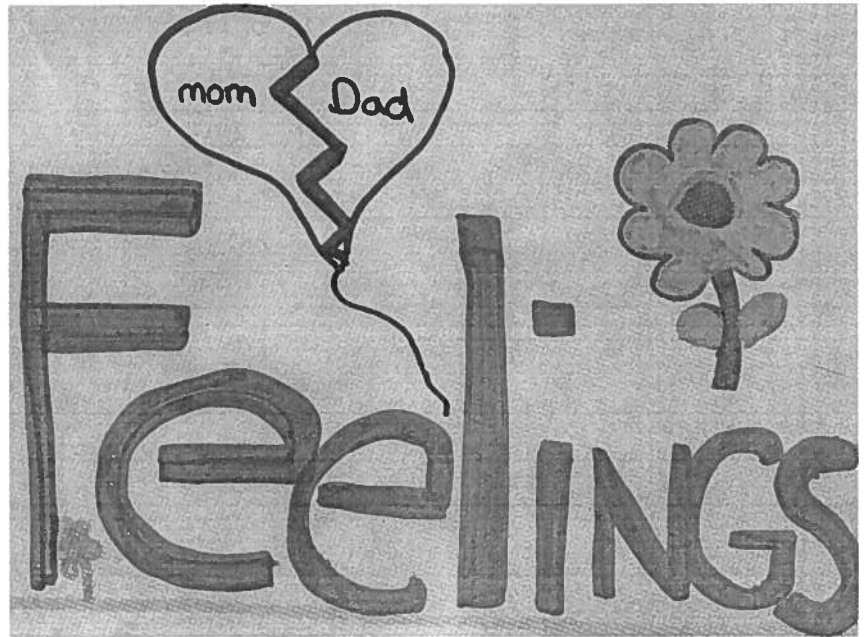
Fear

Kids are usually afraid. It's OK to admit how you feel. You may feel scared about what will happen next. Or you may be afraid to hug your mom in front of your dad because you think he's so angry.

*Why doesn't anyone
listen to me?*

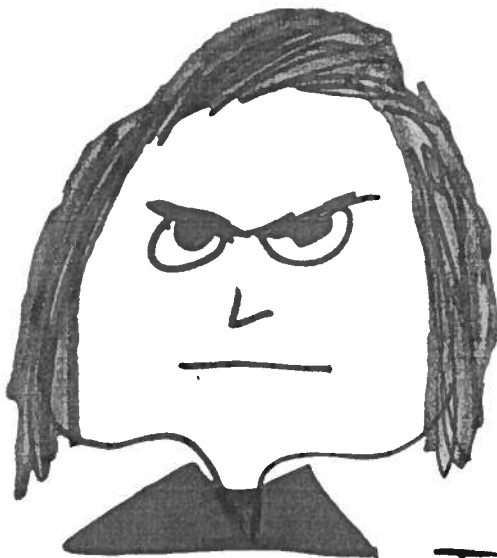


What To Do About Your



Things you can do when you have (unhappy) feelings:

- Talk with a friend who understands.
- Call Dad when you miss him.
- Ask Mom and Dad to stop saying mean things about each other.



Sometimes I need
a break!

- Tell Dad you don't like it when his girlfriend is mean to you.
- Ask Mom and Dad to talk with you about your friends.
- If you're scared, talk with your teacher or counselor instead of fighting with your friends.
- You don't have to think about your mom's and dad's divorce or what's happening at home all the time. Make school a place where you forget about everything except your schoolwork and your friends.
- Keep up with your activities and interests, like sports and music, even though you feel sad.

What to do when you're having feelings about the divorce:

I'm embarrassed... what do I tell my friends and teachers?

It's OK to tell your friends and teachers that your parents are getting divorced and you feel sad.

I can't concentrate at school.

School is the place to forget about your parents and enjoy your studies and time with your friends.

I daydream a lot and don't want to play or talk very much.

When parents divorce, most kids feel sad about the changes in their lives. Try not to dwell on the sadness. Focus on your favorite things, friends, schoolwork, anything to keep your mind occupied.

Staying busy won't make the sadness go away. That will take time. But if you stay active and stop worrying about things you can't change, time will pass quickly. Before you know it, you'll be feeling better about your new family and your new life.

I seem to get into a lot of fights and arguments.

When kids are angry at their parents, they sometimes fight with their friends. If you find yourself fighting or wanting to fight, talk with a teacher or counselor about your angry feelings.

You're Just a Kid

Sometimes I worry when Mom and Dad are sad or lonely.

After a divorce, many kids think they have to cheer up or take care of their mom or dad. Although it's great to love and help your parents, it's more important to let your parents deal with their own adult problems. The best way to help your parents is to take care of yourself. Focus on doing well in school, being with your friends, and enjoying your activities and hobbies.

I feel like a Ping-Pong ball. And when they get me in the middle of their problems, I feel like a Ping-Pong ball stuck in the middle of the net.



Many kids have trouble concentrating.

I Wish...

It may seem like you're the only one going through a divorce. Life after the divorce will be different, but you'll still be a family.

Will they always fight?

Even after the divorce, your parents may not always agree, but things will be more settled.

I want a "normal" family.

Why can't they get back together?

Every kid wishes that the divorce never happened and that Mom and Dad were back together again. Even grown-ups whose parents divorced a long time ago sometimes wish that their moms and dads were back together.

Some parents go on to marry other people after the divorce. And even when the kids like their new stepmom or dad, they often wish their parents would get back together.

Even kids who got really scared when their parents fought want them back together. This is because we all feel uncertain about the future. The divorce has changed forever what we thought we knew about our families.

All of us have dreams about how our families should be, and when a divorce happens, that dream comes to an end. Sometimes the dream seems to have turned into a nightmare. But even when that happens or the dream is gone, the family is still there.

Divorce means your family has changed and it may continue to change. The important thing to remember is that your parents have divorced each other, but they have not divorced you.

Why are they doing this?

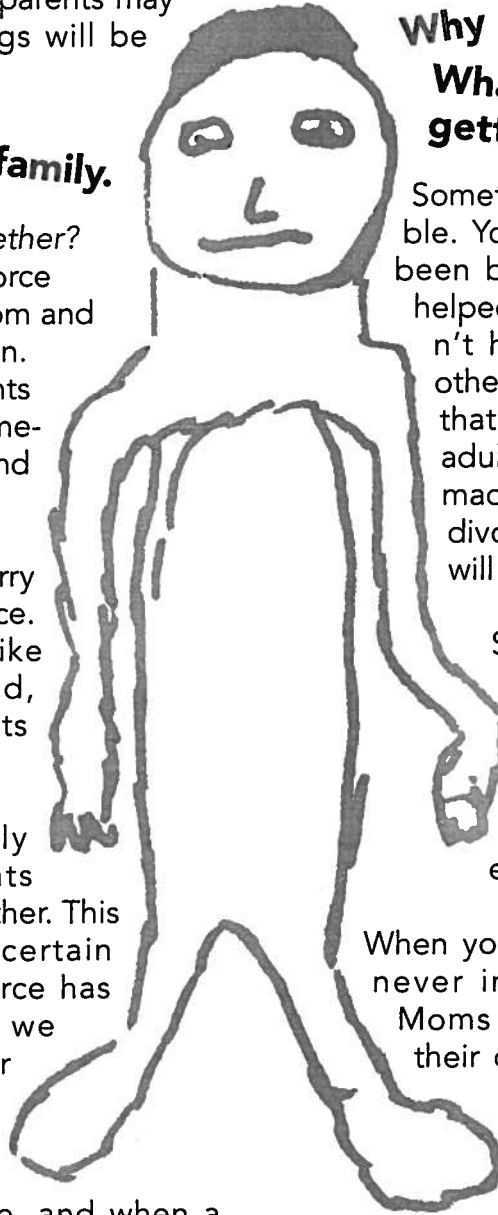
What is the chance of their getting back together?

Sometimes you may feel responsible. You may think that if you had been better or not talked back or helped more, your parents wouldn't have been so mad at each other. You must always remember that kids are not responsible for adults' actions. Nothing you did made your parents fight or get a divorce—so nothing you can do will bring them back together.

Sometimes parents get so hurt and angry in a divorce that they say or do mean things to each other. After a while, it just gets too hard to mend the damage and end the hurt.

When your parents got married, they never intended to get divorced. Moms and Dads have to give up their dreams, too. Another important thing to remember is that they are not "doing this to you." It just feels that way.

Being a family doesn't mean that everybody lives together. It means you are related to each other, no matter where each person lives. When you go away to camp, you are



still part of the family, even though you are gone for a while. When you get older, you will move away to go to college or get a job, but you will always be part of the family.

There are millions of kids whose parents are divorced. Just because things have changed and they are different from how they used to be doesn't make them not normal or not OK.

At first, it seems like a divorce is the worst thing that could possibly happen. It feels like nothing this bad has ever happened to anyone else.

A divorce is so embarrassing for some kids that they are ashamed to tell their friends about it. If somebody asks them why they're so grouchy, they're likely to growl that they're just fine. But they're not!

If somebody asks why you look sad, you may burst into tears and insist that you are perfectly OK. But you're not! You're probably sad, angry, hurt, embarrassed, confused, and a bit lonely, too.

Ask around and you'll find out that lots of kids, even in your own class, have experienced divorce. Maybe even some of these kids have come through all the confusion and are out the other side. Their lives are getting better; they are used to their new families. They see that even though things are different, they still have a mom and a dad who love them.

Some kids wonder if their moms and dads will always fight and act like they hate each other. That goes away with time, but it can go faster if you tell them how much their fighting hurts you.



Sometimes on the weekends he's supposed to take us but he calls and says that he has a bowling tournament. He's so into bowling that he can't come and take us.

Your parents may be so focused on their own feelings that they don't realize how much their actions bother you. Your parents' anger may make them forget that you love them both.

Nobody stays mad forever. Eventually the madness goes away. If you feel caught in the middle of the fighting, the best thing to do is tell your parents.

It isn't your job to carry messages or to help either of them feel better or to decide who you should live with. It isn't your job to decide who was right or who was wrong.

Begin by telling your mom or dad that it hurts you to hear bad things about somebody you love.

**...My Mom and Dad Would
Get Back Together.**

I'm feeling

* A place to find more information on how to deal with separation and divorce - www.familieschange.ca