

Listen 2 Kids About Divorce

I didn't know if they were gonna makeup or not. I was just sitting there confused thinking are they gonna make up or are they not. And then I was thinking no they're not and then I'm more yes they are, no they're not.

Divorce is hard on everybody, but it's especially hard on kids. The purpose of this film is to give parents tools and information to help their children make the best of a stressful situation that the kids did not choose and have no power to change. Who better to help parents understand than the kids themselves and who better to help the kids than their parents who are most invested in their wellbeing. So, listen to the kids as they teach, guide and share their wisdom from firsthand experience.



I think the hardest part is not being with both of them at the same time.



The hardest part is having to go back-and-forth from my mom's and to my dad's.



Because it really hurts my feelings when they fight.



For the longest time, I used to want them to get back together, fix their problems and say they're good but they didn't want to do that.



It puts a lot of stress on kids to hear their parents fight.



My parents are not married. Sometimes I see my dad, not all the time.

Divorce impacts different kids in different ways and with varying intensity. As with other forms of grief and loss, a child's emotions and behavior may fluctuate wildly and unpredictably.



Because of my dad I kind of get angry easily and I've gone in a lot of fights with him.



Yeah sometimes I get really angry inside and I sort of yell at my mom.



It's just like super hard when you go do this stuff because like....



I felt really sad worrying. I had a lot of questions like what was going to happen.



Everything kind of stays kept in. Like, like I have anxiety a lot at night because that's when I get time to think about everything that has happened.

This is a very stressful time for adults. Parents have a different relationship to work out with each other. Schedules have changed and things are really different. The parents must remember that it's an immensely stressful time for children too. Parents need to tune in to them and listen to them often in ways they've never needed to before.



I think that the parents should know that different kids are comfortable with different things like they'll be sad for a long time or they'll be happy at first. So to just be open to any thoughts that they have.



Parents should feel and realize how their children or their kids are feeling and like see like how they're feeling, ask how they're feeling.



I have a lot of my friends that are divorced. When they first got divorced they were sad as well.



I feel confused because I don't really know why they're divorced. I was like, I was really little when they did.



Like after that first one they'd be over and I would just have a happy feeling but instead they started fighting again and then they got a divorce again and I thought oh my gosh.



It was just getting harder and harder not talking about it because I don't really talk to my parents about it at all.



Years ago like when I was 9 or 10, I used to cry so much and it was just like sad because he has another kid with a different girl and like it's just hard because I don't really see him a lot like we don't really communicate.



I felt pretty weird and I felt like confused for some reason that I can't ever figure out why I'm confused.



I felt kind of sad. One night we talked about it and I was crying a lot. When we were driving here I was asking my dad if he would still be my dad.



We were happy and sad at the same time when he left.



It's just hard because I, when you look at like some of your friends they're like how they have both their parents and like just sometimes you wish like you'd have both of yours and it's just like....



My wish was I wish that my mom and dad could be in the same house.



I wish my mom and dad could be in the same house.

Kids' responses are not always emotional. Sometimes they appear as physical symptoms.



I get stomach aches when I get stressed out that and like it feels like heat flashes kind of like, like I'm hot and I'll be like back to normal and then like there'll be another flash of heat like through my body and I cry a lot. I can't go to bed, it's like I drink a can of soda kind of and like it just triggers a chain of bad thoughts.

There are several pitfalls that parents need to avoid as they help their kids through the changes in the family. The first of these is fault. Kids often think they created the situation that caused their parents to split up.



So I feel like I was, like I caused the fight because I was the one first to be yelled at. I was the one who mostly got yelled at and those times I felt like I caused the fight.



I think it was our fault because I think it was we were fighting and they got fighting. I think we just got them stressed out and they started fighting with each other.



Sometimes I feel like I caused them to break up because kids are a big responsibility. They just put too much pressure on them so they just broke up and really don't want to be with each other because of me.

The second pitfall is the most difficult place for a kid to be: stuck in the middle with affection for both parents but also pressure from each.



Sometimes I feel like I'm stuck in the middle because we're talking to him and then mom is yelling at us to get off and our dad is telling us to stay on. It's confusing.



I think when the two parents are fighting with each other that they are putting the children in the middle and that they are like confusing them what side to go on and who they are really supposed to be with but care about both of them.



I feel like I am the kid in the middle because a lot of the time when my dad has letters come in from the government talking about child support or custody issues, my dad always asks for my opinion and my mom does the same thing when my dad brings her into it and I feel like whenever I answer them honestly that it's not right or the answer that they wanted to hear.



It's kind of hard too because I'm gonna have a stepdad so I'm going to be between those two and my mom and my dad.



I really like that she doesn't make us feel stuck in the middle like that.

The third pitfall after fault and stuck in the middle is adultification. That's a big word that means kids are taking on tasks and responsibilities normally handled by adults. This isn't a healthy position for a child. Kids need to be kids.



I do feel like I'm the grownup a lot of times because basically with my dad's work, I had to fend for myself sometimes like make myself lunch at age 6 or things like that.



I just do well the chores so my dad can like hang out. I do all of his stuff so I'd be like super nice and stuff.



I want to be with my grandma and my cousins. They like, they help



It really sucks when sometimes you have to help take care of your siblings because they're struggling so much. When my mom and dad were still together, they'd fight a lot and my little brother would always ask you know, what are they fighting about

and I didn't necessarily want to explain it to my brother because I didn't want my brother to grow up with that but he did.

Kids find lots of creative and resourceful ways to feel better as they deal with the uncertainty and changes confronting them. This is how they show their resiliency.



The way I get out of the middle of the fight is I go to my room, lay down and watch funny shows.



My mom taught me a breathing technique that kind of slows down my heart and then helps me fall asleep.



We listen to music, that also helps us a lot.



When we're with dad, we play with cars. At our grandma's there's a basketball hoop inside.



I really like football.



I kind of started to learn that I need to talk to my dad about this stuff and I can't just keep it in.



Sometimes I ask my mom questions but not all of them. I have a school counsellor and I meet with her every Friday so I can talk about that with her.



Talking to a friend or to my mom about what's going on helps a lot.



I would say just talk to someone and stay positive.



A lot of people think that games are bad for you but it sometimes helps me relieve a lot of stress with how things are going on and it makes me know that I don't have too bad of a life.



I want to be the best football player I can be and be the best of all time.



I have a dog and so I just kind of play with him and that helps tremendously actually.



I imagine that sometimes that I'm not the queen that my daddy is the queen, the king and my mom is the queen. Because I really don't like them fighting a lot so I just imagine that they don't fight.

Kids' adjustment to family change is not a predictable process. Each kid does it differently and often it takes longer than we think it should. Kids often grieve in short spurts but over an extended period of time.



It took me about a year and a half to adjust to that.



I do miss my parents when I'm at the other house like, I just think it's better for the family also because they're not fighting in front of us and they're happy.



We really do do really well with the situation but I think it might be because we can't really remember how it was before this.



When they first split up they were kind of angry with each other and sometimes when the other picks us up, they would get in small fights still, but now they're just friends kind of so it's a lot better now.



They just don't really talk about it so it just makes it just feel like this is how it's gonna be.



We're very happy with our new life. We miss our dad and we don't miss our dad at the same time. I go to a new school which makes me very happy with the friends I have there.



You just get used to, I still see them both and I'm happy but you know, I tell them that you know that as long as you're both still with me and that they're both still happy I'm fine.

The most powerful influence in a kid's life is the example parents set. This is called modeling. For better or worse what parents do is far more important than what they say. Research shows that kids' brains are wired to absorb and mimic parents' attitudes and behaviors almost unconsciously.



Kids can learn almost anything from parents. I have learned how to keep cool under heated situations.



My grandma she is divorced with my grandpa but she is his caregiver and she takes care of me, my brother and my cousins. I've learned from my grandma to be respectful and treat others how I'd like to be treated.

Spend time with your kids and listen to them. They tell us how critically important it is for parents to stay involved.



My mom she just always, she's the one who has really helped me do all this like she's my mom and dad.

She shows, she shows me how to live like be respectful, listen to your parents and do good in school and stay in school. Do all you can to have a good life.



Grandma helps a lot with it. She sort of like makes sure I'm ok and like I'm not like getting hurt by what's happening down there.

Let's listen to the experts as they tell us about what their parents have done for them that has been helpful. It's often the little things that mean the most to kids.



The best thing about dads is they take you to the best sports.



Moms do nice things.



We hang out that has a lot with mom and we, I play in my, in my toy room.



The best thing about moms is they cuddle with you.

The kids have told us the importance of modeling and staying involved in their lives, but what else can parents do? Once again, the best answers come from the kids themselves.



Parents need to know how they're hurting their kids' feelings by fighting and making the kids sad.



They could be like telling their kid it's okay and it's not the end of the world.



I think parents shouldn't talk bad about each other and like they don't ____ down the kids.



They should make their child feel comfortable with the divorce.



When you're in fights about the divorce between them two, never like get the kid involved with it.



They should make their child feel at home in both homes.



The most important thing for parents to remember is like they have a child and they can't just like kind of forget about him or her. They're still their child and still their responsibility, they can't just kind of give up.



Another rule would probably be always like kids' body language is pretty easy to read I feel. And so like if there's anything you can tell like anything is wrong, always ask them hey what's wrong, is there anything I can do because it's just hard.



Parents should always help their kids do stuff.



I think that if they're going to have a fight or they're mad at each other, they should go somewhere else other than their own house to get it out and they shouldn't argue about it, they should actually resolve it.



There's like a triangle, like if you make a triangle there's like one part that's like one corner, the kid, one corner the mom, one corner the dad and the mom and the dad line, that line is broken. So when the two lines are connected to the kid, the mom's line is connected to the kid, the dad's line is connected to the kid, the kid loves their parents and the parents love the kid.



If I had a wish for my family I'd probably wish that my mom and dad would just forgive each other for everything that's been said and done and not continue to hold on to all the negativity and anger and hurt and to just let it go.